

Poet Lore

VOLUME XXIV

VACATION, 1912

NUMBER IV

SWORD AND CROZIER

Drama in Five Acts

BY INDRIDI EINARSSON

(Authorized translation from the Icelandic by Lee M. Hollander)

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

BOTOLF, bishop of Holar

KOLBEIN ARNORSSON 'THE YOUNG,' chieftain of the 'North Quarter of Iceland,' thirty-four years old

HELGA, his wife

SALVOR, woman physician

THOROLF BJARNASON

ASBJORN ILLUGASON

HAF BJARNASON

} Henchmen of Kolbein Arnorsson

KOLBEIN KALDALJOS, kinsman of Kolbein Arnorsson and steward of the bishopric of Holar, seventy years old

BRAND KOLBEINSSON, his son, chieftain of Reynistad, thirty-three years old

JORUN, his wife

KALF, eight years old

THORGEIR, six years old

} their sons

BRODDI THORLEIFSSON, brother-in-law of Kolbein Arnorsson

SIGURD, deacon

HELGI SKAFTASON

ALF OF GROF

} henchmen of Brand

EINAR THE RICH, of Vik

HELGI, priest at Holar

Copyright, 1912, by the Poet Lore Company. All Rights Reserved.

ILLUGI, the blind beggar

BOY LEADING ILLUGI

JARNGRIM

Followers of Thorolf Bjarnason, of Brand, and of Kolbein Arnorsson.
People of Holar in Hjaltadel.

The scene is laid in the district of Skagafirth, in the North of Iceland.
The action takes place during the winter previous to the battle of Hunafloi,
1244 A.D.

ACT I

SCENE I

(So-called 'Little Hall' in BRAND'S manor-house at Reynistad. Enter the DEACON SIGURD, THOROLF BJARNASON, ALF OF GROF, and EINAR THE RICH, of Vik.)

Deacon Sigurd.—Thorolf, Lady Jorun bade you wait here until her husband comes.

Thorolf.—Where is Brand Kolbeinsson? I bear a message for him from my Lord Kolbein the Young.

Sigurd.—Why comes he not himself?

Alf.—Kolbein is nigh unto d —

Thorolf.—Are you garrulous again, Alf?

Sigurd.—He lies sick with his wound, I ween.

Thorolf and Alf (remain silent).

Einar the Rich (aside).—That news I ought to bring secretly to Thord Kakali.

Thorolf.—Why will Lady Jorun not speak to her guests?

Sigurd.—She bade me say that she had seen you last, Thorolf Bjarnason, at such business that she cares not to see you any more.

Thorolf (laughs).—Last I saw her at the slaying of Kalf Guttormsson, her father, and of Guttorm, her brother.

Sigurd.—Much good reason has my lady if she cares to see you no more.

Einar.—You are the man who most egged on to the deed, that father and son should be slain.

Thorolf.—No, Urækja it was, the son of Snorri Sturlason. A most useful deed it was. Ever since Kolbein's men have obeyed his commands without gainsaying.

Einar.—More useful still, I suppose you think that you snatched from out of Kalf's hands the crucifix he held when kneeling to receive the mortal stroke.

Thorolf.—His blood would have spurted on the cross, had it been held

so near. (*Wrathfully.*) And likewise would I do to you, Einar the Rich, if Kolbein struck off your head. Your wife is a kinswoman of Thord Kakali, and dreamt have I that you will find an earlier grave than will I.

Einar.— An evil business it is to threaten me with death. No one knows who will be buried first. A faithful follower of Kolbein I have been.

Thorolf.— ‘Scarce shall I trust you,
Troll, quoth Haustkoll.’

Sigurd.— Wicked speech this is and witless.

(*Enter BRAND KOLBEINSSON, BRODDI THORLEIFSSON, HELGI SKAFTASON, and others.*)

Brand.— You here, Thorolf Bjarnason?

Thorolf.— Ay, sir; and with a message for you, for Broddi, and for other chieftains, from Kolbein the Young.

Brand.— Is it that Thord Kakali is expected from the West with war?

Thorolf.— Not to my knowledge. He is still busy drinking the arvel after Tumi his brother, whom we put to death this last week!

Alf.— Yes, and he and his men are now drinking the ale by the bowlful, they say.

Brand.— What of it, if Thord does give his men in plenty?

Thorolf.— And why should we not speak of it, we who know what folly it is for men to drink heavily before going to war?

Einar.— A generous chieftain is Thord Kakali, and likely to accomplish great deeds. No chieftain in this land has ever lost so many men as has he. It is not seeming to make sport of his sorrow.

Thorolf.— None have I ever seen flee so fast as these men of Thord’s, they urge each other on to flight.

Brand.— Idle speech is this, Thorolf!

Thorolf.— I say what I will, and care not whether others like it or no.

Broddi.— Where is the message my brother-in-law sends us?

Thorolf (handing the letter to BRAND).— I have lived all my life in warfare and am not able to read.

Brand (handing the letter to DEACON SIGURD).— Read for us, deacon!

Einar the Rich (while SIGURD is undoing the strings with which the parchment is tied, aside to ALF OF GROF).— I know you are no friend of Thorolf; stay behind here and help me to persuade Brand Kolbeinsson.

Alf (aside to EINAR THE RICH).— Broddi and all of Thorolf’s neighbors hate him because he elbows himself forward ruthlessly. Against my will I left my home with Thorolf; but how shall I kelp you?

Einar (aside to ALF).— Help me dye Thorolf’s white coat of mail as red as blood.

Alf (aside).— Hush! We would have to fight against great odds.

Einar (aside).—Not if Brand Kolbeinsson were on our side.

Alf (aside).—Brand—indeed! No, if Broddi Thorleifsson were with us.

Sigurd (has now untied the parchment, reads).—‘To Brand Kolbeinsson of Stad, to Broddi Thorleifsson, to Kolbein Kaldaljos, and to Paul Kolbeinsson, Kolbein Arnorsson of Flugumyr sends God’s greetings and his own. Little we know of Thord Kakali’s affairs after Easter. After the slaying of his brother Tumi it is but likely that he is preparing for war against us, and in such case, if he came upon us from the West, we of the North Quarter would want to subject him to a severe test. But now it is so ill with our health that we may no longer conceal it from you. Because of this it is our will that all of you meet me here as soon as possible. Only in this wise may we prevent the danger now threatening both the entire quarter and our district.’

Brand.—To what danger to the district does the letter refer? Is Kinsman Kolbein sick anew, then?

Thorolf.—Answer that yourself; but well may these words mean that it were better now to take off the ‘velvet glove’ and bestir one’s hands.

Brand (angrily).—Get you gone, Thorolf, at once! Astonishing it is that you should be sent hither to Stad, such enemies as we two have been.

Thorolf.—My course I shall steer wheresoever it take me, whether or no you like it, Brand Kolbeinsson. To horse, yeoman Alf!

Alf.—Unwillingly I followed you, Thorolf, and left my farm work behind. Take with you the two companions that always have followed you—death and the devil!

Thorolf.—Right, you insolent fool, death has ever been my companion. (BRAND KOLBEINSSON goes to the door and opens it.) Now you precede me to the door, Brand Kolbeinsson, for higher-born than I you are. But in all tests of manhood, in assemblies and in battles, I have gone before you. There is no danger in going before me now; it is quite safe! (*Exit.*)

Broddi.—An astonishing thing it is that base men should dare to speak in such wise to chieftains!

Brand.—He is a greater friend of my kinsman Kolbein than any other man.

Einar.—And in greater favor even with Lady Helga than with Kolbein.

Sigurd.—He journeyed to Rome with Kolbein. Such a pilgrimage atones for many a sin.

(Enter LADY JORUN with her and BRAND’S sons, KALF and THORGEIR.)

Jorun.—What errand brought Thorolf Bjarnason hither to Stad?

Brand.—Kolbein the Young sent him.

Jorun.—Then we shall have to put up with that insult.

Alf.— Your husband he called a ‘velvet glove!’

Jorun.— Gentle have his hands ever been to me, and I might well call him so.

Alf.— And a coward he called him.

Jorun.— Slower he is to ill deeds than Thorolf.

Einar.— *Me* Thorolf threatened with death, and to wrench out of my hands the crucifix, whenever I should lie down for the blow, just as he did to Kalf Guttormsson.

Jorun (moved to tears).— Was that done to my father?

Sigurd.— It was indeed done to him, and a mighty ill deed it was.

Jorun.— I had not thought that men who were to lose their lives would be thus cruelly dealt with.

Alf.— These men have indeed done enough to forfeit *their* lives, and ought to live no longer.

Helgi Skaftason.— If no one can be prevailed upon to kill them I shall undertake it.

Alf.— No one’s duty it is as much as yours, Brand Kolbeinsson, to take revenge for the murder of Kalf Guttormsson.

Jorun.— Let no one be so bold as to seek revenge for my father. Full composition did Kolbein the Young pay for reconciliation, after the death of father and son, with the fine of hundred marks silver, which were paid out to my mother and me as stipulated.

Einar.— And yet might Brand and others take revenge for the wrongs they have suffered at the hands of Thorolf, even though Kalf Guttormsson’s death be atoned for.

Jorun.— Do not undertake so dangerous an enterprise, my husband. Well you know that if you slay Thorolf his friend Kolbein will slay you all in revenge.

Alf.— Kolbein lies nigh unto death.

Broddi.— Is his condition so dangerous?

Brand.— Why have you not told news so important and so — sad until now?

Alf.— I could not, on account of Thorolf. Kolbein holds his malady secret as long as he can.

Brand.— Then my kinsman Kolbein must have summoned us to dispose of his dominions before he dies.

Sigurd.— That is, all the North Quarter and the Westfirths!

Brand.— About the Westfirths we have been at war until now.

Einar.— And his heir? (*All look at BRAND.*) They say that it is the wish of Lady Helga to set Thorolf Bjarnason over all the dominions.

Many.— Thorolf Bjarnason?

Alf.—Impossible!

Broddi.—It would mean the death of one man or many men.

Brand.—Helgi Skaftason, have the saddles laid upon twelve horses! I and eleven men shall ride forthwith to Flugumyr. (*Exit HELGI.*)

Kalf.—Lay saddle on my horse also. I shall ride to Flugumyr to my foster-mother.

Broddi.—What will you of her, my young fellow?

Kalf.—I want to get the weapons she has promised to give me.

Jorun.—No weapons, Kalf! You will not go to Flugumyr, this time; rather too long you have been there as a child. (*Towards BRAND KOLBEINSSON.*) My husband, remember my words. To kill one of my kinsman Kolbein's or Lady Helga's men is to conjure up odds against you, whatever be the provocation. (*Exit with the boys.*)

Broddi.—Never shall that come to pass that a man of low birth govern so large a dominion. (*Exeunt all.*)

SCENE II

(*Room at Flugumyr. LADY HELGA and the woman physician SALVOR enter.*)

Helga.—I have much to do about the house and can attend the patient but little. How is my husband, Salvor?

Salvor.—Rather poorly! He is now confessing to Bishop Botolf, Lady Helga.

Helga.—Confessing? Did he speak about the disposition of his dominions after his death?

Salvor.—The bishop touched upon that, but Kolbein said that this would have to wait until his kinsmen were assembled.

Helga.—To what purpose is the advice of his kinsmen in that matter? I see how it will end.

Salvor.—I have hopes that your husband will again recover his health this time.

Helga.—And how long will he keep it then?

Salvor.—So long as he stirs not.

Helga.—My husband will have to go to war and do battle as long as he lives.

Salvor.—Now he longs for peace.

Helga.—Then is he surely sick! (*Vehemently.*) My husband must not be sick; he will have to speak with his kinsmen, when they come. Give him strong drugs that he may have strength to do so. His sickness must not become known in the Westfirths by Thord Kakali.

Salvor.— Such strong drugs are not without danger.

Helga.— What danger is there in them?

Salvor.— That he loses possession of his senses, and becomes even more sick thereafter.

Helga (vehemently).— His kinsmen must not know that he is sick, or else they will take matters in their own hands. He will have to have drugs so strong as to give him strength to hold council with them.

Salvor.— But if he loses possession of his senses during it?

Helga (with a look of relief).— Let me take care of that. Then I shall speak for him, for all his intentions are known to me.

Salvor.— My advice it is not to use strong drugs; they may endanger Kolbein's life.

Helga.— Will you, low-born woman, give advice to a great?

Salvor.— Why seek you then a low-born woman to heal the great?

Helga.— I knew none better. Do as I bid you!

Salvor.— I shall do as you bid, my lady. You run the risk, not I.
(Enter THOROLF.)

Thorolf.— Hail, lady! How is the chieftain's health?

Helga.— Rather good! Salvor says he will not be able to bear going into war for the first.

Thorolf.— Kolbein has a-plenty of men to lead his troops.

Salvor.— Brand Kolbeinsson —

Thorolf.— He, the velvet glove! Whilst Kolbein was on his foray to Reykholar and slew Tumi — a feat now famous — Brand was to dispatch old Sturla Thordsson — the fellow who mostly goes about with ink on his fingers. But Sturla gulled him so that Brand had to return with shame. Brand lacks both forethought *before* battle and that fire *in* battle which wins the victory.

Salvor.— Brand Kolbeinsson is a man of peace.

Helga.— You shall stay here at Flugumyr now, Thorolf, whilst my husband is in ill health. Brand Kolbeinsson would be but a low wall between us and Thord Kakali, should he advance from the West.

Thorolf.— So long have I been one of your household, my lady, that I am bound to obey. But who shall take care of the shipbuilding which I have under way for Kolbein the Young?

Helga.— Your wife Arnfrid; for this is not a place for women to be at.

Salvor.— The ships that are to be used for carrying our war into the Westfirths this spring?

Thorolf.— Yes. This spring we shall lay waste the Westfirths, kill cattle and people, burn down storehouses, farms, and churches, and slay all men we overtake. Thord shall not be able to hold himself there thereafter.

Salvor.— Holy mother of God! Why are the people to suffer all that misery and affliction! Have there not been enough maimings and killings in the Westfirths? Be mindful, Thorolf, that you, too, may be taken captive and your bright coat of mail get a red collar.

Thorolf.— Often have I thought of it. But he who lets himself be kept back by such thoughts had better never venture into danger.

Helga.— Go now, Salvor, and attend to the patient! (*Exit SALVOR.*) The life of my husband is in great danger!

Thorolf (coming close to her).— And shall I then become the Lord of Eyafirth?

Helga (motioning him away).— Kolbein the Young still lives. Whilst he is living the disposition of the dominions remains his matter. It may well be, though, that I succeed in making him give you Eyafirth, and then more people from here would settle there than are there now. Then I shall foster up young Kalf, the son of Brand, because he will inherit Skagafirth from his father; and while he is young, and I gain influence over him, it may happen that the men of Skagafirth and Eyafirth would work in unison in all undertakings, and rule the entire country alone.

Thorolf.— Certainly! Certainly!

Helga.— Swear allegiance to me, Thorolf!

Thorolf.— I have ever been faithful to you.

Helga.— Will you be obedient to me, Thorolf?

Thorolf.— Yes, gladly (*kisses her hand*), now as always before.

Helga (gently).— You have always been true to me, and that shall be rewarded as soon as ever I can.

(*Enter BRAND KOLBEINSSON, BRODDI, DEACON SIGURD, EINAR THE RICH, ALF, HELGI SKAFTASON, together with six others.*)

Brand.— Hail, lady!

Helga.— Hail, my nephew! Hail, all of you! My husband has been expecting you with impatience.

Einar (aside).— Now we shall see how sick a man Kolbein is.

Helga.— We pray you all to say the least possible about the infirmity of my husband; I have no more than sixty armed men about me.

Broddi.— And who is their leader?

Helga.— Thorolf Bjarnason, Asbjorn Illugason, and Haf Bjarnason.

Broddi.— And Thorolf Bjarnason remains here?

Thorolf.— First I shall return to my estate to give orders as to my affairs.

Helga (aside to THOROLF).— You speak incautiously, to tell them where you mean to go. I read your death in their eyes.

Alf.— You will not refuse me to keep you company on the way home?

Thorolf.— No; I care not to have your company, you insolent fool!

Helga.— You will remain here with us, Thorolf, on account of the infirmity of my husband and our defencelessness otherwise; you can send some one else to arrange matters on your estate.

(*LADY HELGA and those about her exeunt by door. BRODDI, ALF, and EINAR THE RICH remain behind in the foreground.*)

Broddi.— Lady Helga has become suspicious of us.

Einar.— Sharp are the eyes of my Lady Helga whenever Thorolf is concerned.

Alf.— He has slipped from our grasp, the hellhound!

(*KOLBEIN THE YOUNG, pale and weak, is borne in on shields by ASBJORN ILLUGASON HAF BJARNASON, and others. BISHOP BOTOLF and SALVOR enter with them.*)

Kolbein.— Hail to you all!

Botolf.— Pax vobiscum!

(*They bow to KOLBEIN and the BISHOP. KOLBEIN is borne to the high seat. HELGA stands beside him, also SALVOR keeps near him always.*)

Brand (coming forward).— How stands matters with you, kinsman Kolbein?

Kolbein.— Not so very well.

Broddi (coming forward).— You have but a small body-guard about you to-day, brother-in-law!

Kolbein (pointing to BISHOP BOTOLF).— This body-guard alone has been sufficient for some time.

Brand.— You have summoned us to meet you.

Kolbein.— I wanted, with the assistance of my kinsmen and of others, to make such provisions for our dominions as would most likely result in peace for the district.

Brand.— Peace we should desire for every consideration, since many regions are beginning to grow poor.

Sigurd.— The wars have fanned into flame hatred and malice over all the land.

Botolf.— Blessed are the peacemakers!

Kolbein.— During these last days the deep wound I received in the battle of Orlygsstad has been troubling me sorely, and I am so exhausted that I often look forward to death. Now you well know that Thord Kakali has lost through me both father and five brothers. That stands in the way of peace in the district. I therefore offer to go abroad and give up all my dominions.

Helga.— Give up all dominions!

Botolf.— And yield them to King Hakon?

Kolbein.— If King Hakon should lay claim to my lands I should give

him six feet of land, or so much less as he lacks in height. To give Iceland to him is as bad as yielding up one's soul to the devil.

Brand.— But who is to receive the lands?

Kolbein.— I shall give all my dominions to Thord Kakali, and thus atone for the killing of his father and brothers. Your own cases would then be at his mercy. I expect that you will fare well in this, because just then did Thord prove to be my best friend when I entrusted my matters entirely to him; at that time you were also on friendly terms, you and the men from Skagafirth.

Botolf.— That would be a disposition promising peace, if the king himself is not to receive the dominion. (*Aside.*) It is the same as if King Hakon did receive it.

Brand.— You will deprive me of my rightful inheritance, and give up all your dominions to Thord! Then will I rather fight for them until I fall.

Broddi.— Thord may think he has so much to settle with us that we could not endure the punishments he would inflict upon us — that is, if we had any desire to do so.

Einar.— If all dominions were given up to Thord he would treat us well.

Botolf.— And then there would be peace on earth and good-will among men.

Thorolf.— In Thord's Hall all we, your men, would have to sit upon the lower bench. His men whom we have pursued, wounded, stripped of their clothes, and beaten whenever we engaged them, they would take revenge on us, under cover of him. All of us desire but one of two things, to do battle until we gain peace, or else, to fall with such renown as is granted us.

Asbjorn.— We will follow no other man whilst you live.

The followers of Kolbein.— No, no other man!

Kolbein.— Then your other choice is that all yeomen at their own expense guard in four parties the frontier during the remainder of winter. The first will have to be on the Skagafirth, to guard the road over the Kjol and the ways leading from Storasand. The second guard will have to be in Vididale, Vatnsdale, and Nupsdale to watch the paths over the Grimstungu-heath, and the one over Tvidægra-heath. The third and fourth guards will have to be in Midfirth and Hrutfirth, and to protect the ways along the Holtavordu-heath, and those from the Dales and Strands. When the sea is safe two light-sailing vessels will have to be sent around the Skaw to reconnoitre the sea-way toward the west.

Broddi.— Well, you have thought out everything, brother-in-law; to me this plan of war seems in every regard the best.

Thorolf.— If it is followed, Thord will never return west alive over the Blanda River, should he attack us.

Asbjorn.— Thord will be able to get over the Kjol Mountains or the Sprengisand Desert, down to the Eyafirth. There he will call upon his friends and attack us in the flank.

Thorolf.— That is unthinkable. In order to reach either of these ways Thord would have to journey around the whole island, and then overcome Hjalti the bishop's son, and Gissur's men. I should think it likeliest that Hjalti would flee north over the Kjol should he be defeated, and come our way some little time before Thord, who would have to go by a farther way and would waste his time in getting the men of Eyafirth to rise. Kolbein's plan of war is the best that can be chosen.

Kolbein.— It is most often Thorolf Bjarnason who best comprehends my plans.

Broddi (*aside, clinching his hand against his breast*).— Does he understand them best?

Brand.— All shall be done as you bid, kinsman Kolbein. I myself shall send three hundred men as guard into Hunathing.

Kolbein.— Then all is well, kinsman Brand!

Salvor.— You speak too much, my lord!

Kolbein.— I must speak to-day; to-day to-morrow is not sure to me (*to the others*). The third matter is the apportionment of the districts after my death.

Salvor.— Speaking irritates your wound, my lord, and you may become delirious.

Kolbein.— Let come what may! I will that my kinsman Brand have Skagafirth and Hunathing after my death. But Eyafirth and all districts east of the Heath I give to—— (*He becomes delirious. Lady HELGA makes a motion and stops him.*)

Kolbein.— See, wife, now fly the swans from Holar in Hjaltadale.

Botolf (*to DEACON SIGURD*).— He is dreaming about the messengers of the Holy Church, the sick man!

Sigurd (*to BISHOP BOTOLF*).— He will not live till to-morrow's matins!

Helga (*bending down over KOLBEIN*).— Appoint Thorolf Bjarnason!

Broddi.— Who is to get Eyafirth?

Brand.— I heard no one named.

Kolbein.— I name you, Thorolf Bjarnason!

Broddi.— For what do you name Thorolf Bjarnason?

Helga.— For the chieftainship over Eyafirth and all districts north of the Heath.

Broddi.— I claim that I have better title to it than Thorolf.

Thorolf.— It will prove a troublesome business for you to wrench Eyafirth out of my hands. (*In a whisper to HELGA, to whom he has approached more closely.*) Am I given Eyafirth then?

Helga (whispers back).— Do not let it be seen that you are whispering to me. They will become suspicious. My position is difficult.

Kolbein.— I shall spare you, kinsman! (*Speaks unintelligibly. HELGA bends down over him.*)

Helga.— My husband wishes that you, Brand Kolbeinsson, and you, Thorolf, shall swear to each other an everlasting truce, now immediately.

Brand.— Is that your wish, kinsman Kolbein?

Kolbein.— It is. It is. Six hundred men! Advance bravely after me! My kinsman Brand is in great danger.

Broddi.— Always it is you, Brand! Physician, attend to the sick man.

Salvor.— Carry your chieftain into his bed!

Kolbein.— Woden owns all the slain men! Neither Thord Kakali nor one of his men will return alive over Blanda. Another battle won. A great and glorious victory. Carry away the fallen, I will not see them. Woden owns all the slain men.

Botolf.— So much devilish magic yet living in a Christian country!

And this man have I shriven but a short while ago! Woden owns all the slain men! (*KOLBEIN's men surround him to bear him out on their shields. HELGA speaks fast and in a low voice to ASBJORN ILLUGASON.*)

Helga.— Place our armed servants before all doors. And let them stay there. And leave the doors open after you when you come in again.

Kolbein.— Woden owns all the slain men. You bleed, Thorolf Bjarnason. Put on your head, Thorolf! Put on your head! Beware of the cave by the Kolbeinstream!

(*ASBJORN ILLUGASON, HAF, and others carry KOLBEIN out. SALVOR follows them. HELGA leads BISHOP BOTOLF to the high seat.*)

Helga.— I have neglected to show you those marks of esteem which I ought to have shown you, my lord! But my situation has been a troublesome one for a while.

Botolf.— I have been thinking in my mind the while, my lady, how much you resemble in mien and carriage the women of the ancient race of the kings of Norway.

Helga (laughs).— I am a descendant in the fourth generation of King Magnus Bareleg, and were I a man and not a woman I would be nearer to the throne of Norway than your King Hakon. This relationship cost my brother Paul his life, when he was in Norway.

Botolf.— That story I have heard! But his death was not the wish of the Norwegians.

(ASBJORN and HAF, and the men who carried out KOLBEIN, come in again, leaving the door stand open. One sees armed men standing outside. LADY HELGA seats herself on the dais.)

Helga.— How long shall my husband wait until you swear the truce to each other, Thorolf and Brand?

Botolf.— The Holy Church cannot confirm the apportionment of the districts which you have made, excepting the chieftains swear each other an everlasting truce.

Brodidi.— The Holy Church owns not the Northland Quarter!

Botolf.— But God does; and do you for his sake as Kolbein and the lady bid you, because that promises best for peace.

Helga (*very loud*).— Close the door! (*All look to the door and perceive the armed men; it is closed.*) Haf Bjarnason will pronounce for you the words of the truce. The truce which his namesake established between the men of Skagafirth and Grettir Asmundarson was well kept, and it redounded to their honor.

Brodidi (*aside to BRAND*).— Agree to the truce! Sixty armed men are standing but a few feet away!

(BRAND KOLBEINSSON places himself in the left foreground, with six of his men behind him. HAF behind him in the middle ground. THOROLF advances to the right foreground, posturing himself opposite BRAND.)

Asbjorn.— Are we to be witnesses, Thorolf?

Thorolf.— All those present shall be witnesses!

(ASBJORN and five others arrange themselves behind him.)

Helga.— In Oddi, at my father Sæmund's, I heard that those oaths were void which were made against one's free will.

Thorolf.— I shall swear a truce to Brand Kolbeinsson of my own free will.

Helga.— And you, kinsman Brand?

(BRAND looks toward the door and says nothing.)

Helga (*stamps her foot on the floor of the dais, whereupon the door opens slowly, and swords and spears become visible*).— And you, Brand Kolbeinsson?

Brand.— I shall swear a truce to Thorolf with a willing mind. But what are the conditions, and for what offence the fine?

Helga.— Thorolf Bjarnason shall make atonement for having, in my hearing and in the presence of other men, given Brand Kolbeinsson a nickname; he shall pay for his offence with the ring which he wears on his arm and which weighs six ounces. Is this offer of reconciliation a good one?

Brand and Thorolf.— Indeed a good one!

Helga (*taking a large ring off her arm and holding it between her fingers*).— Pronounce, then, the pledge of truce, Haf— according to our laws!

*Haf (sets a little table between them and stands beside it. Receives the ring from THOROLF, holds it in one hand, and a parchment in the other, and pronounces the pledge of truce in an impressive manner).—*Contention there has been between Brand Kolbeinsson and Thorolf Bjarnason. But now is this contention no more, a fine has been paid according to the decision of good and noble men, of full weight, and good metal, and handed over to him to whom it is due. But if contention there should arise again between them, then shall they settle by fee, and not by reddened steel. But if one of these parties become so bereft of his senses that he break this reconciliation, and pledge of truce, or becomes the contriver of the other's death, then shall he be driven from God, and from the commerce of all Christendom, as far as men pursue wolves, Christians visit churches, heathen men sacrifice in temples, mothers bear children, children say mother, fire burns, ships sail, shields flash, the sun shines, snow lies, pines grow, the falcon flies the long spring day, with a fair wind under both his wings. He shall shun churches and Christian people, the house of God and the houses of men, and the abodes of men, and every home but hell. (*HAF lays the ring on the parchment, which he holds between them. They lay each their right hand on the book.*) Both of you with your hands touch one book, and even on it lies the fine with which Thorolf atones for his offence, for himself and for his heirs, conceived or unconceived, born or unborn, baptized or unbaptized; and in return he receives from Brand Kolbeinsson assurances of eternal and everlasting truce, a truce which shall persist the while the earth lasts and men live. (*Silence. BRAND KOLBEINSSON takes the ring off the book and puts it on his arm, whilst HAF lays the book on the table again.*) Now you, Brand Kolbeinsson and Thorolf Bjarnason, shall be men reconciled and agreeing, wherever you meet, whether on land or on sea, on ship or on ski, on sea or on horseback, on bench or on thwart; and if need be, divide between you oar and scoop, knife and piece of meat; shall be at one with each other as is father with son, or son with father. Join hands now (*they grasp each the other's hand*) and stand by your truce according to the will of Christ and all those men who now have heard your pledge of faith. May he have the grace of God who keeps the truce, but his wrath he who breaks it. Let this be a full reconciliation between you, and let us be witnesses who are present.

(*THOROLF approaches HELGA, who gives him the ring she had been holding. He puts it on his arm, without anybody noticing it but her. BISHOP BOTOLF walks up to her. The ranks of the witnesses mix, BRAND and BRODDI station themselves in the foreground.*)

Botolf.—A great work and one sorely needed have you performed to-day, my lady. Assuredly more than small good fortune it is to have

reconciled two such men whom Kolbein the Young never could prevail upon to become reconciled, as we are told.

Helga (smiling).—The granddaughter of Ion Loftsson of Oddi ought to have sufficient good fortune to reconcile by her sole efforts men who both are her friends.

Brand (aside to BRODDI).—May it never be avenged on Lady Helga to have cowed me by overwhelming force to promise an eternal truce to my worst foe.

Broddi (to BRAND).—But a short while will the hand rejoice over the blow!

(*Curtain*)

ACT II

(*A cave by KOLBEIN'S stream. The stage represents a small vale with the cave in the background. The cave is large and deep, opening in the direction of the spectator. Water has been coursing down the vale and has frozen to knolls of ice here and there. A part of the cave-mouth is hidden by icicles formed by the water trickling from the rock above the cave. Snow is falling heavily and drifting. This continues throughout the act.*)

(BRAND KOLBEINSSON, BRODDI, ALF, DEACON SIGURD, HELGI SKAFTASON, EINAR THE RICH, and six others enter.)

Alf.—A cursed ill weather this!

Sigurd.—The great drift-ice must be near!

Brand.—But there is shelter in this cave here, and here we shall stay awhile.

Einar.—A witch-storm this is, and we have lost our way!

Broddi.—The weather is cold and fit for men. We would do well to use our stay here for coming to an agreement about our attack on Thorolf Bjarnason; because home he journeyed, even if Lady Helga assured us to the contrary.

Einar.—Let us make away with the new chief of the Eyafirthings!

Brand.—For me it is not seeming to be in this undertaking, having sworn an eternal truce to Thorolf.

Broddi.—But none of us others have.

Helgi Skaftason.—I am not your slave, Brand Kolbeinsson; and if I may not avenge the insults Thorolf has inflicted on you, I shall no longer be your follower, either.

Broddi.—All your men will desert you, if you permit them not to avenge you on Thorolf.

Brand.—What would men say if my followers broke a pledged truce?

Alf.—A truce under compulsion it was, with sixty men, but a few steps away.

Einar.—Slight is your recollection concerning the murder of Kalf the son of Guttorm!

Brand.—It is better to suffer than to do ill.

Brodde.—It is seeming to a chieftain to commit deeds of injustice and highhandedness, so soon as need be for them; but not to suffer them of others.

Brand.—What need is there that we kill Thorolf Bjarnason now rather than before?

Brodde.—He is now set as lord over Eyafirth. He is our enemy, and as it is the Eyafirthings have grievances against us.

Alf.—For their shameful defeat at Orlygsstad and the fall of their chieftains.

Brodde.—The Eyafirthings will assail us from the east under Thorolf, and Thord Kakali from the west. The henchmen of Lady Helga will stand by Thorolf, and not by you, Brand.

Brand.—But Gissur Thorvaldsson will come to my help over the mountains from the south.

Brodde.—An ill thing, to have Gissur as one's only friend. He is no warrior, keeps no promise, and dares not to fight.

Sigurd.—Never rely on Gissur's valor!

Alf.—He is a coward!

Einar.—None of you mentions what is of most importance. Lady Helga it was, and not Kolbein the Young, who assigned Eyafirth to Thorolf.

Brodde.—That is a lie, Einar!

Einar.—Kolbein had become delirious when Helga asserted Eyafirth was given to Thorolf.

Alf.—That, indeed, is the truth.

Several.—Yes, that indeed is the truth.

Brodde.—Does *she* mean to arrange the districts? If so, we mean to make away with Thorolf. You shall have no hand in this, Brand Kolbeinsson, but your men shall follow me.

Brand.—And who is to follow me?

Brodde.—No one!

Brand.—That was the cause of my kinsman Kolbein's greatness that all his men obeyed him without a murmur. No one obeys me now!

Einar.—But this obedience came first about after the fall of Kalf Guttormsson.

Brand.—No need to remind me again that Thorolf was the foremost instigator to the killing of him.

Broddi.— Let us then seize Thorolf, wherever we may find him, and slay him.

All (except BRAND).— Yes, let us slay him!

Broddi.— Or else let us surround his house and lead him out to be put to death.

Alf.— Oh, let him perish in the flames of his own house.

Sigurd.— For shame, Alf! I do not care to share the torments of hell with incendiaries.

Brand.— Kolbein the Young will surely take revenge on us for his friend Thorolf.

Einar.— Kolbein is no longer to be reckoned among living men.

Broddi.— Kinsman Kolbein lay more sorely stricken with his wound this time than last, and even then was in danger of his life.

Alf.— I cannot tell a doomed man if he ever arises again.

Sigurd.— A great loss it would be if a chieftain so noble and so beloved should depart this world.

Broddi.— And one so victorious!

Sigurd.— Let us pray for his soul!

(Silence. All present show marks of grief and of praying.)

Broddi.— But you will lend us your aid, Brand, after the slaying of Thorolf, and will take steps to make Lady Helga leave the district?

Brand.— It is not seeming that I give counsel to those who plan Thorolf's death.

Broddi.— We shall help you to obtain all the dominions in Skagafirth and west as far as Hrutfirth for it; because it is not so very sure whether all are willing to accept you as overlord.

Brand.— I thank you, friend Broddi. But I shall take no part in your dealings with Thorolf. Afterwards I shall not part from you.

Alf.— Let us touch our weapons to confirm it, according to Norse custom!

Many.— Yes, let us brandish weapons!

Broddi (mounting a rock).— We, Alf of Grof, Broddi Thorleifsson, Einar the Rich, and all who are here, excepting only Brand Kolbeinsson, agree, and brandish our weapons in confirmation of our purpose, that we shall not part from one another, and share a common fate, until we shall have brought from life to death Thorolf Bjarnason.

(All, except BRAND, lift their weapons and strike their shields with their swords.)

Brand.— And remember then, Broddi, what you promised me!

Broddi.— We all who are assembled here promise and brandish our weapons in confirmation thereof, to aid Brand Kolbeinsson to gain dominion

over Skagafirth and west as far as Hrutafirth, after the death of Kolbein the Young; he on his part promises to support us with all his might in the action against us for the killing of Thorolf Bjarnason.

(All raise their weapons and clash them against their shields, BRAND likewise.)

Sigurd.—The weather has been clearing up this while.

Broddi.—Who will now seek the way and go before us?

Brand.—Alf Gudmundsson of Grof. *(They depart.)*

(The stage is empty for a while, the snow begins to fall and drift again. Of a sudden, JARNGRIM is seen to stand in the cave. He has a spear in his hand and is tall and of strong frame. He wears a wide cloak with the hood down over his eyes. He has a long beard. As soon as he appears two ravens settle over the mouth of the cave and disappear with him.)*

Jarngrim (leans on his spear and calls out).—Thorolf!

Thorolf (from without).—All's well, companions, I heard a human voice! *(Silence.)*

Jarngrim.—Thorolf!

Thorolf (from without).—Where are you?

Jarngrim.—Here!

Thorolf (and two others enter. THOROLF'S men never see JARNGRIM. They kindle a fire forthwith).—What is your name, friend?

Jarngrim.—Jarngrim I am called.

Thorolf.—We have lost our way. Will you allow me to sit down at the fire?

Jarngrim.—There is a plenty of dry fuel in the cave.

(THOROLF'S men have been kindling the fire which burns up brightly.)

JARNGRIM nods to THOROLF.)

Jarngrim.—This eve we shall drink mead together!

Thorolf.—And no houses hereabouts? *(With arising suspicion.)* How many are there of you?

Jarngrim.—Never have I had a companion, except my horse and two hawks.

Thorolf (points to the ravens, mockingly).—Your hawks are of a black color, likely; they are sitting there near enough to you.

Jarngrim.—Near they sit to me, whenever good prey is near.

Thorolf.—Who has made you an outlaw?

Jarngrim.—The White Christ.

Thorolf.—Excommunicated then you are! Bishop Botolf will absolve you if you confess to him your troubles.

Jarngrim.—Never would Botolf admit me to church if he knew who I am.

* In Norse mythology Woden (Odin) is represented as one-eyed. Else, his attributes are those described here.

Thorolf.— Give some of your property to the church for absolution.

Jarngrim.— The temples of the White God have taken possession of all my goods, except my horse and my hawks,— we four still journey together.

Thorolf.— Become my follower and accompany me to Eyafirth, if Kolbein the Young dies.

Jarngrim.— Kolbein the Young will not die. But to be your man, Thorolf, I care not, because you pursue your ends to excess, small means as you have. It will never end well.

Thorolf.— How can you know that, you who are ignorant of all?

Jarngrim.— An old man knows that a man's character is his destiny.

Thorolf.— Go then and serve Kolbein the Young if he lives.

Jarngrim.— Oft was I a follower of Kolbein.

Thorolf.— How may that be, then, that I know you not?

Jarngrim.— The haughty heed not though they see a sage. Most men knew me in former times, but few know me now. Small has become the number of my friends.

Thorolf.— Now I recognize you, friend. I saw you in the battle of Orlygsstad, when you stood over the corpse of Sighvat Sturluson.

Jarngrim.— A great friend of mine was Sighvat.

Thorolf.— And a short time ago, when you stood over the body of Tumi Sighvatsson, at Reykholar. You turned your back to the church. And whither are you journeying now?

Jarngrim.— Thither where tidings are near. Whenever I come down the mountain side there arises tumult in the valleys; wherever I remain all day great battles are fought. The Norns have decreed all that. But now men say that the White God is about to come from the south, with great splendor, and that he will bring with him peace. I ween it will prove a lie.

Thorolf.— Decreed by the Norns! You must be an old man?

Jarngrim.— I was Ingolf's the First Settler's pilot on his journey to Iceland.

Thorolf.— I am not a book-learned man; yet must you, then, be exceedingly old and yet are not gray-haired.

Jarngrim.— I and my likes grow not gray.

Thorolf.— Will you tell me where I am?

Jarngrim.— This is the cave by Kolbein's stream.

Thorolf (shudders).— I have heard it mentioned! But what do you here?

Jarngrim.— I gather shields for my roof.

Thorolf.— Shields?

Jarngrim.— Those that drop from the hands of men slain in battle.

Thorolf (in fear and wrath).— You plunder the dead!

Jarngrim.— Mine are all the slain!

Thorolf.— Are you Woden, then, the father of all devils? (*Draws his sword and strikes at him, but the blow strikes the roof of the cave.*)

Jarngrim (*who has not stirred while the blow was struck*).— Rarely avails the blow which is struck too high.

Thorolf (*holds his shield before his body, with his sword behind it, and peers under the hood of JARNGRIM*).— You startled not!

Jarngrim.— But you have changed color. I never blink my eyes.

Thorolf.— Yet it may go ill with but one eye, you evil spirit!

Jarngrim.— Many are the eyes of day, *the night has but one!* Let not the fire die down, Thorolf! The mead you will drink with me to-night has become warm! Is well-nigh ready.

(*JARNGRIM walks into the cave. As soon as his back is turned a black patch is seen between his shoulders. THOROLF strikes another blow at him, but his sword strikes the rock wall. JARNGRIM and the ravens vanish.*)

Thorolf.— Is he hiding here, the hell-hound?

His Men.— Who? Who?

Thorolf.— I have spoken with Woden and he has foretold me my death.

First Man.— You have not spoken with any one, since we came here. But we have heard avalanches in the distance, nor is that strange in weather such as this.

Thorolf.— I shall live no longer than this fire burns! Take well care of the fire, men! Where are you, my men? (*Falls into a swoon. The second man tends the fire and makes it blaze up; the first man busies himself with THOROLF.*)

Second Man.— He is very ill.

First Man.— He may have seen some ill wight, for ever since he saw the fire he has lost his senses.

Broddi (*behind the stage*).— There is that fire again, let us go that way.

First Man.— I heard some one speaking, a small distance away. Likely, they are no friends of Thorolf's who are abroad.

Second Man.— And no water at hand to put out the fire, neither would it avail now.

Brand (*without*).— None but fugitives will be here!

(*Enter BRAND KOLBEINSSON, BRODDI, ALF, EINAR THE RICH, DEACON SIGURD, HELGI SKAFTASON, and six other men.*)

Broddi.— What's this? Seize the men that cower over Thorolf. (*THOROLF's men are seized and disarmed.*)

Einar.— There he lies now, the lord of Eyafirth!

Alf.— Strike the dog!

Thorolf (regains his senses and stands up quickly).— For shame, neighbor Alf! Why do you seize upon my men and hold them?

Broddi.— So that they may harm no one! Now, Thorolf, it is our intention that this will be our last meeting.

Einar.— Death is before your door now, Thorolf.

Thorolf.— 'The love of many girls had I,
One time every one must die.' *

Did I see right? Is Brand Kolbeinsson here?

Einar.— Here he is.

Thorolf.— There is no glory in my overcoming such as you, Einar the Rich. But there, I want to get to where stands Brand Kolbeinsson. (*BRAND stands still while these words are exchanged; some men stand between him and THOROLF. THOROLF rushes at BRAND, but the others fell him and wound him before he has reached BRAND.*) Now was I too short by one step.

Einar (giving THOROLF a wound).— You have always despised me!

Thorolf (gets upon his feet, but is held fast and made to surrender his arms).— A priest I would now have, Broddi, in the name of God!

Alf.— What will you with a priest, you heathen dog?

Broddi.— All the more need. Go to him, Deacon Sigurd!

Sigurd (goes to THOROLF, whom the others release).— You know, Thorolf, that I am a priest?

Thorolf.— Give me absolution, priest, the same as if you were in my place! My soul is in danger. I have spoken with Woden, but a short while ago. He said the ale was ready which we were to drink together to-night. For God's sake absolve me well of my sins!

Sigurd.— So shall it be.

Thorolf (to BRODDI).— What will you have for my life?

(*BRODDI remains silent.*)

Thorolf.— I offer you to leave the country and never come back to Iceland.

Broddi.— You must know, Thorolf, that you are to die. There is no other condition.

Thorolf.— Each of you would consider himself too young to die already, if he were in my place now. You are keeping long your vow of everlasting truce, Brand Kolbeinsson!

(*BRAND remains silent.*)

Thorolf.— Those that keep it as you do 'shall shun churches and Christian people, the house of God and the houses of men and every home but hell!' A great wonder it would be if you obtain the absolution of a priest in the hour of your death. I summon you before God, Brand Kolbeinsson!

*These lines are from a stanza spoken by one Thorir Jokul, when kneeling for the blow (Sturlunga, 143).

Broddi.—Lead the man away to be executed, Helgi Skaftason, you have a good axe.

Helgi.—That I have; nor shall I refuse its service.

Thorolf.—Helgi Skaftason is then to ——! (*Quickly takes his ring off his wrist and comes close to SIGURD. EINAR happens to stand near so that he can discern their speech.*) Can you keep a secret, priest?

Sigurd.—That can every one who is in holy office.

Thorolf (*gives him the ring and says in low voice*).—Quickly hide this ring and bring it to Lady Helga.

Sigurd (*do*).—With what message?

Thorolf.—That you shall be spared life and limb, though you have been participant in this onslaught on me. (*EINAR gives a start.*)

Sigurd.—And any others?

Thorolf.—Little I care.

Einar (*aside*).—That ring must I try to get hold of.

(*THOROLF is led out to the left; all the others follow, excepting BRODDI and BRAND.*)

Broddi.—You must not be present at it, Brand! I shall tell you what is happening. Now Thorolf is shriven; he has but few sins to confess; he has been absolved but recently.

Brand.—If they had not lit the fire we would never have found them. Better had it been they had not lit it!

Broddi.—A pity that brave men such as Thorolf was should not be good men to work together with, likewise. Now Thorolf kneels down for the blow. Do not look that way, Brand!

Brand.—Has he the crucifix in his hand?

Broddi.—No; he reached it to Deacon Sigurd, before kneeling down. Why does Helgi let a brave man wait so long for the blow?

(*A heavy blow on a body is heard without. BRAND starts up, pulls THOROLF's ring from his arm and gives it to BRODDI.*)

Brand.—Give Helgi Skaftason this ring; he will have need of the value in it. It is the ring Thorolf handed over to me in Flugumyr. I will not wear it!

Broddi.—It shall be as you wish. Now our men have laid a shield over Thorolf's body.

(*The slayers of THOROLF enter from the left.*)

Alf.—Great news abroad!

Brand.—We know what has happened, and that Thorolf Bjarnason is dead.

Alf.— 'Dog-like on crushed bones he fed,
Tan of bark his hide dyed red.*'

* Alf's lines are to be understood, so that Thorolf lived like a beggar in his youth, eating crushed bones (of dried fish; the dried fish are beaten with a hammer so as to crush the bones and separate them from the meat), and gnawing the bark of trees. (H. Hermannsson.) The lines are from a stanza made by one Gudmund Asbjarnason on Thorolf Sturlunga, ch. 122.

Broddi.— Shame on you, Alf, to make mock at Thorolf, now he is dead.

(Enter from the right LADY HELGA, ASBJORN, and SALVOR. HELGA in traveling costume, with a veil with long white tassels. All present are greatly alarmed as they see her.)

Brand.— Lady Helga! Hail, cousin!

Helga.— Hail to all of you! *(They bow to her.)* What are you about, here, kinsman Brand?

Brand.— I am biding for better weather. But what may be the purpose of your journey?

Helga.— I am on a voyage to inspect our building of ships. In the snowstorm I and Asbjorn lost our way; but a short while ago we saw a fire or a light and turned that way. Now we are come here.

Brand.— How fares Kolbein, your husband?

Helga.— Very eager you are now to succeed to him. *(Smiles. THOROLF's men, weaponless, come running up and stop behind.)* You here!

First Man.— They have slain Thorolf Bjarnason. His body lies here!

Helga (grasps at her heart for a moment).— Thorolf Bjarnason! Slain!

Second Man.— But this moment they beheaded him.

Helga.— Oh, pity that I came too late! *(Shoves ASBJORN aside and fixes her eyes on those present.)* Who of you slew T-h-o-r-o-l-f?

Helgi Skaftason (advances and dries his axe on the fringes of her veil; she smiles at him).— Here you may see the blood of Thorolf, your friend, my lady. Me you have to thank for it that his locks are bloody.

Asbjorn (pushing forth between them).— You wretched knave!

Broddi.— Shame upon you, Helgi Skaftason!

Helga.— What business of yours is it? *(Smiling, to HELGI.)* You may depend upon me for rewarding you for the precious stain you have put on my veil. Not just now. I shall find you later, Helgi Skaftason!

Alf (to BRODDI).— She will bring a plague upon us all; let us draw a sack over her head.*

Broddi.— I shall kill you, Alf!

Helga (to BRAND).— Is it from our kinsmen at Oddi that you have learned how to keep an eternal truce, Brand, 'a truce which shall persist the while the earth lasts and men live'?

Brand.— Lady!

Broddi.— Brand Kolbeinsson had no part in Thorolf's execution.

Helga (smiling).— Then it is clear he has kept the eternal truce. Perhaps neither you had a part in it, Broddi?

Broddi.— I shall not deny that I had, lady.

Helga.— But little you know the mind of my husband, Broddi, if you think he will let his men lie dead by his house and unatoned. You, Asbjorn,

* A measure taken against the influence of the 'evil eye' of witches.

and you, men of Thorolf's, lay now his body upon my sleigh. I intend to bring Kolbein the Young, his friend. Very likely I shall have to dress his bloody locks. But that shall I say to you all that Kolbein the Young is almost quite well again, and may be able to wear mail even to-morrow. (*All are startled and become alarmed.*)

Alf.— Loose sits my head on its shoulders!

Helga (smiling).— You will do well to hold it fast with both your hands, Alf of Grof. (*Aside to SALVOR.*) Lend me your arm! My eyes grow dim!

(*Exeunt HELGA, SALVOR, and ASBJORN, the two men of THOROLF. HELGA walks away like a queen, smiling, and saluting to both sides. Silence.*)

Helgi Skaftason (leaning on his axe).— But a short while will the hand rejoice over the blow.

Broddi.— She smiled rather too often, the queen of the Northlanders!

Sigurd.— We shall be dead men, all of us, before seven suns have set, unless we bethink ourselves of some counsel.

Brand.— Give us some counsel, Broddi, or else my kinsman Kolbein will set our women busy dressing bloody locks also.

Broddi.— We have but little choice. Let us collect as many men as we may. I myself hope to collect two hundred men, for all the men of Sletthlid and Fljot are at home now, building boats. Yourself ought to be able to collect one hundred. All this troop we shall let come together at Holar and occupy the stronghold there, until more men come together. We would then have three hundred men, while Kolbein has no more than one hundred, because three hundred of his men have been sent west to guard Vididal and Vatnsdal. Then we shall march upon Flugumyr as fast as possible before he has had time to recall these men. There we shall inform him that we are come to seek composition.

Brand.— But, first of all, we must be absolved for the murder of Thorolf, so that men will not refuse our company and deal with us.

Broddi.— A pity that we need to, because it will delay us, and meanwhile Lady Helga will inform Kolbein about Thorolf's death and egg him on against us. To Holar, then!

Einar (aside).— Thord Kakali ought to know about this in good time. (*Exeunt all except BRODDI and BRAND, who remain after.*)

Brand.— When think you, Broddi, that all this slaughtering and warring will cease?

Broddi.— When all the world has become a wilderness again!

(*Exeunt.*) *Curtain.*

ACT III

(The Cathedral at Holar. High altar in the center, and over it Christ on the Cross, an image of white alabaster, with bloody hands and feet and side, life-size. To either side, in the aisles, altars of the Virgin, splendid with images. On the floor of the aisle the tombstone of Bishop Gudmund Arason, surmounted by a statue of the bishop in his sacerdotal vestments, recumbent. Doors at both sides. The spectator is supposed to sit in the pews.)

(BISHOP BOTOLF, in full pontificals, stands before the altar. BRAND KOLBEINSSON, BRODDI, ALF, DEACON SIGURD, EINAR THE RICH, HELGI SKAFTASON, and six others kneeling before him weaponless with bared neck and shoulders. An invisible chorus sings the end of a Miserere. The music stops as soon as the psalm is finished.)

Botolf.—By that power which God gave to the apostle Peter to bind and to absolve all in heaven as well as on earth, which power he bestowed upon the pope, and the pope upon the archbishop, and the archbishop upon me, by this power I absolve you: Brand Kolbeinsson, Broddi Thorleifsson, Alf Gudmundsson, Deacon Sigurd Thjodolfsson, Helgi Skaftason, Einar the Rich, and you six other men, from the sin of your having been present at and caused the death of Thorolf Bjarnason; I absolve you from the excommunication of the Holy Church and permit to you church-going, and the association of Christian men.

Brand.—In return for our being freed from the excommunication of the Holy Church I and Broddi Thorleifsson each will give the value of five hundred in land, to the see of Holar; and two hundred for each of those who were present at the slaying of Thorolf, as is set forth more explicitly in the deed of gift which I now deliver into your hands and which Deacon Sigurd worded. *(Gives the bishop a scroll of parchment. BRAND and his men rearrange their garments.)*

Botolf.—Exceeding bold have you become, Deacon Sigurd, to carry weapons and to shed blood.

Broddi.—A weaponless man is but a wretch, my lord!

Sigurd.—Armed priests went to war with Bishop Gudmund Arason, my lord!

Botolf.—Because of his visitations with armed men, his battlings, and his unruliness Bishop Gudmund was declared to have forfeited his office.

Brand.—Yet retained his office as bishop till his dying day, through the good services of Kolbein the Young.

Botolf.—Kolbein is king over you all, yet archbishop, I know, he is not. Over my clerics I mean to rule so long as I am in power.

Sigurd.— I did not urge on to Thorolf's execution, and no sacraments would he have received had I not been one of the company.

Botolf.— For that reason I shall let pass by your transgression, this once, but leave your weapons here, when you depart, and never more carry weapons henceforth.

Sigurd.— I shall obey, my lord!

Kolbein Kaldaljos (enters).— Now I would pray you, sir bishop, that you assist my son and his men to obtain a becoming reconciliation in the action about Thorolf's death; because my namesake Kolbein was a staunch friend of his.

Botolf.— Those who are reconciled with the Holy Church ought also to be reconciled with all Christian men.

Alf.— They ought certainly; but Kolbein the Young is but little of a Christian when he means to take revenge for one of his men.

Broddi.— He will perhaps call the slaying of Thorolf an act of insurrection against himself.

Botolf.— It is an ill matter to assist rebels.

Kolbein Kaldaljos.— Thorolf insulted my son by giving him a nickname, and he took revenge for that.

Botolf.— You Icelanders must be more deliberate in your words than are we Norwegians, if every nickname shall cost a man's life. The slaying of Thorolf was a wicked deed, because Brand swore him an eternal truce. But in this land every one seems hardened in the ways of Kain.

Kolbein Kaldaljos.— My son Brand will succeed to Kolbein the Young!

Botolf.— He will succeed Kolbein? Then shall I seek to bring about a reconciliation between you and Kolbein the Young!

Broddi.— And for the purpose that it come about in the smoothest manner possible I need the fortifications of your see a day or two for my men.

Botolf.— You will be welcome to use them, Broddi.

Brand.— In still another matter give me assistance, sir bishop! During the hostilities that have lasted all these years a certain man who was being led to execution summoned me before the tribunal of God.

Botolf.— For that the Church knows no other help than a general indulgence and your living the rest of your natural life in peace.

Brand.— In peace? How is that possible now?

Botolf.— Blessed peace! when will you descend upon this blood-stained earth?

Broddi (smiling).— You must call out louder, my lord, to do some good! The blessed peace has been stricken with deafness these times.

Botolf.— Oh wicked mockery!

Broddi. — Wicked indeed, if it were not true.

(The cleric HELGI enters quickly.)

Helgi. — Kolbein the Young is riding toward Holar at this moment, with a hundred men.

Alf. — Let us flee to the mountains.

Broddi. — Let us wait for my brother-in-law Kolbein at this spot.

Alf. — He will have us dragged out of the church and killed.

Broddi. — I shall not flee with my shield on my back.

Brand. — No, friend Broddi, we shall not part as yet. *(Seizes hold of BRODDI, whom they drag out by force between them.)*

Broddi. — Why run away thus? I care not when I die.

(BRAND and his eleven companions depart, together with KOLBEIN KALDALJOS.)

Helgi. — Now they will offer you violence, my lord.

Botolf. — I expect no harm from Kolbein the Young, no wrong have I done in this land, but only what all may thank me for, and that is to reconcile the chieftains.

Helgi. — But it was in your presence that Gizur betrayed Urækja at the bridge over the White River.

Botolf. — But Kolbein released Urækja again!

Helgi. — Much do you say in defence of Kolbein the Young; the enemy of our sainted Bishop Gudmund Arason, my father-brother. Now the blessed bishop has revealed himself to me in a dream and announced that at this very hour he would make known his glory and power, right here in the church, through a miracle on Illugi, a wretched blind man. I wish much that Kolbein should behold it, so that he might repent of his ill deeds against this holy man. A *miraculum magnum* will come to pass!

Botolf. — Nothing, indeed, would so much allay Kolbein's violence as the holiness of Bishop Gudmund becoming apparent. It would make him ready for reconciliation, should he behold that he used ill so great a saint. But are you so very sure that the see of Holar really possessed such a holy man in Bishop Gudmund?

Helgi. — Most certainly, indeed! *(Exit.)*

Botolf (alone). — Bishop Gudmund a saint? Notwithstanding all the slayings and destruction that followed in his wake? Bishop Gudmund a saint, hm! He who used to speak a blessing over mad dogs, with his hands uplifted! Bishop Gudmund a saint, hm! Well, then would the church indeed be victorious over Kolbein the Young and his men.

(Enter KOLBEIN THE YOUNG, HAF, and ASBJORN. They salute the bishop, who returns their greetings.)

Kolbein. — I have come hither, sir bishop, to confer with you.

Botolf.— With whom then do all those your men wish to confer, and what mean the arms you carry into the church?

Kolbein.— Tumult and riot is rife in the district.

Botolf.— But a few days ago I expected to hear of your death, Kolbein, rather than see you here heading a host of men.

Asbjorn.— Does it not suit you, my lord?

Botolf.— I desire the death of no man.

Kolbein.— For a while I was very sick, indeed; but no sooner heard I of the death of my friend Thorolf than all weakness left me, so that now I am a well man again.

(*Enter CLERK HELGI, ILLUGI THE BLIND MAN, and HIS BOY, who supports him. People stream in with them, stationing themselves in the doors and near them. CLERK HELGI makes ILLUGI kneel down before the sepulchre of BISHOP GUDMUND, so that he turns his face to the spectators.*)

Helgi.— Kneel down now before the sepulchre of the sainted friend of God who appeared to you in your dream; because your prayers have made you deserving of that beatitude. Embrace the image of our blessed father and say the Lord's prayer.

Kolbein.— Is that man blind?

Illugi (looks up and glances at him for a moment).— I am born blind.

Kolbein (aside to HAF BJARNASON).— His eyes were fixed on me as he looked up.

Helgi.— Domine Gudmunde, fac miraculum magnum!

Illugi (muttering).— Pater noster!

Helgi.— Behold the white hand of the saint, how it draws the film from the eyes of the blind man!

Kolbein.— I have not the gift to see such things.

Helgi.— Oh ye of little faith!

Some at the Door.— I smell sweet fragrance. I see a tongue of fire above the tombstone of Bishop Gudmund!

Others.— He was good to the poor!

Illugi (with a loud voice, lifting up his crutch and arising).— Praised be the blessed Bishop Gudmund! My eyes can see!

Helgi.— O miraculum magnum!

The People at the Doors.— A miracle! A miracle! A miracle!

Botolf.— Let all bells of the church be rung.

Kolbein.— Wait an instant, my lord! The eyes of the man are unchanged. Let him prove that he can see.

Helgi.— Ay, let him do that, my lord! Let the man prove that he can see, so that Thomas be made to believe.

Kolbein (aside).— Hand me a parchment, Haf! (*HAF takes a scroll*)

out of a box in the choir and reaches it over to him.) You were blind, then, when I spoke to you before?

Illugi.— I am born blind, my lord! But now it seems to me I can see all that others see.

Kolbein.— I have still my doubts about that (*holding the parchment before ILLUGI*). Are you able to see what this is?

Illugi.— A parchment, my lord.

Kolbein.— And can you discern what is there written?

Illugi.— I can see the letters clearly.

Kolbein.— That you could say, although you could not see them.

Illugi (reads).— ‘And when St. John was arrayed in his pontifical robes, ready for burial ——’

Kolbein.— How is it possible that you who are born blind have learned to read?

(*ILLUGI remains silent, greatly frightened.*)

Helgi.— O miraculum magnum! Holy Bishop Gudmund has imparted to him the art of reading!

Illugi.— The glorious saint appeared to me last night in a dream and taught me to read, so that I might prove to-day that my eyes can see.

Kolbein.— In that case more forethought was shown by Bishop Gudmund than he was accustomed to show when he was alive.

(*BISHOP BOTOLF becomes uneasy; KOLBEIN's men look at each other smiling.*)

Helgi.— The revelation of the saintliness of Holy Bishop Gudmund has affected me so much, my lord, that I forgot to have all the bells of the church rung. (*Intends to leave.*)

Botolf.— Wait with that a little while, Helgi.

Haf.— They will ring of themselves when the time has come.

Kolbein.— Where are you from?

(*ILLUGI remains silent, as to all following questions. The boy always looks at him first before answering, making reply only when he sees that ILLUGI remains silent.*)

Kolbein.— Where are you two from?

The Boy.— From the Hornstrands, my lord!

Kolbein.— What was Thord Kakali about when you left?

The Boy.— We do not know, my lord!

Kolbein.— You must have remained over night at Bolstadarhlid before you ascended the Vatnsskard.

The Boy.— We did, my lord!

Kolbein.— Did yeoman Jon send me no message by you?

The Boy.— No, my lord, yeoman Jon sent no message by us.

Kolbein.— You must be a clever and trusty lad, though you are young.

The Boy.— You give me high praise, my lord, and it is good to hear.

Kolbein.— You are careful to ask men about their names, or get to know them from others. That is doing well for a young lad.

The Boy.— I asked yeoman Jon myself what his name was, my lord!

Kolbein.— There you lied again, little boy. The yeoman at Bolstadhlid is called Thorvard Arnason. (*The boy runs out.*)

Helgi.— You lied in that yourself, Kolbein, to say that the yeoman's name was Jon. The boy would never have dared to ask the yeoman about his name.

Kolbein (to HAF).— Seize hold of this man and bring him into the prison at Flugumyr. Bishop Gudmund will open its doors for him if time hangs heavy on his hands there. (*ILLUGI the blind man runs out, forgetting his crutches; the people follow him. One hears the multitude outside shouting, 'A miracle.'*)

Asbjorn (to HELGI).— Was it Bishop Gudmund or Kolbein the Young who made that man forget his crutches?

Helgi.— If Kolbein has done it, then has he done it by the help of Beelzebub. (*He gathers up the crutches. HAF and ASBJORN follow him as he leaves the church.*)

Kolbein.— Did you have a part in this farce, my lord?

Botolf.— No, my lord! (*Mutters.*) Pia fraus, pia fraus!

Kolbein.— Then all is well. Bishop Gudmund was a witless man, but no saint.

Botolf.— That is without example in Christendom how you laymen of Iceland treated Bishop Gudmund; you killed his men and his clerks, went to battle against him, beat and bound him, and in no wise let him enjoy peace.

Kolbein.— Bishop Gudmund was a scourge upon the land. On his journeys he devoured the property of one farmer in the morning, and of another in the evening.

Botolf.— Finally you deprived him even of his freedom.

Kolbein.— That was the very best thing for him!

Botolf.— Such conduct on your part violated God's laws.

Kolbein.— But not the laws of this land, sir bishop. They say, 'But if a man have a savage dog, then shall this dog be kept bound.' And I took the dog and bound him, sir bishop!

Botolf.— The property of the church it was that tempted you, and not the laws of the land; and how have you atoned for your robbery?

Kolbein.— With my and Thorolf Bjarnason's pilgrimage to Rome.

Botolf.— And with the help of this property of the church you have set yourself in the place of that man who alone had divine right to the land.

Kolbein.— His is the land who holds it.

Botolf.— The king of Norway lays claim to all the land settled by Norwegians.

Kolbein.— The fewest of the settlers on Iceland's soil were subjects of the king of Norway. For that matter, why comes not King Hakon and take the land from us?

Botolf.— Because many hands would be raised in its defence, and the king wishes the land to remain in peace.

Kolbein.— No one has caused more feuds among us Icelanders than has King Hakon. All feuds arose through his devices.

Botolf.— Raise the banner of King Hakon in this land, Kolbein!

Kolbein.— Who would bear the banner for that coward? No, but should the king come hither you will see me take up a banner; but it will not be that of King Hakon!

Botolf.— In order to bring the land under the king's dominion you would need but to ride to the king with twelve hundred men and let all the assembly swear an oath of allegiance to the king. Both bishops would stand back of you in that undertaking.

Kolbein.— Norwegians both!

Botolf.— The archbishop has written me that the king would raise you to the highest rank among Icelanders if you did that.

Kolbein.— What I am already I need not become by the grace of Hakon.

Botolf.— He would give you an earl's rank and set you over all Iceland.

Kolbein.— They gave Snorri Sturluson an earl's name, and the king became the contriver of his death.

Botolf.— The archbishop writes that the king would make you highest commander among his forces, if you should prefer that.

Kolbein (rejoiced at first, but quickly controls himself).— Is that written in the archbishop's letter?

Botolf (taking out a scroll of parchment).— Here you may read it!

Kolbein.— Leader of the Birchlegs!* That is a goodly army! No, for that my health suffices no more — they all are brisk men! Tell the archbishop that even if I were always in good health I would think it a nobler thing to do battle against the Birchlegs than with them.

Botolf.— You are the only Icelander who hates Norway and its king, Kolbein!

Kolbein.— I remember too well that my father died in Norway an enemy of the king and the archbishop. At that time I was thirteen years and dull it seemed to me in Norway thereafter.

* The name of the Norwegian king Sverre's hardy soldiers.

Botolf.— If such is the case, Gizur and Thord Kakali will stretch out both their hands after the honors you now turn your back upon. Gizur has already received honors from the king.

Kolbein.— I recall that Gizur has become his link-boy. It is strange that he wanted to snuff candles for Kakon.

Botolf.— Gizur holds lands from the king and is his kinsman.

Kolbein.— Whatever the king may make of my kinsman Gizur, I know for sure that he will never be able to give him the courage to take up arms against me.

Botolf.— But he might go so far as to let Thord Kakali have his men, and Thord would dare to fight with you.

Kolbein.— He does indeed! I shall have to kill Thord before mid-summer!

Botolf.— True is the saying that no chieftain in Iceland lays himself down to sleep any day without danger!

Kolbein.— We are mortal men, we chieftains.

Botolf.— Will Gizur also have to be made a head shorter before mid-summer, Kolbein, should he come to Iceland?

Kolbein.— Who can know what the future will bring, sir bishop?

(*ASBJORN and HAF enter in headlong haste.*)

Asbjorn.— There is prospect of tidings; Broddi Thorleifsson comes riding down the valley with two hundred armed men.

Kolbein (wrathfully, to the BISHOP).— What seeks my cousin Broddi at Holar with two hundred men?

Botolf.— The peace of the land seems insecure to him and he is coming hither for defending himself in the fort.

Kolbein.— You encourage men to rebellion against me, you devil in a bishop's guise! Is that the peace the king and the archbishop intend to bring to the land?

Botolf.— What means this wrath in God's church?

Haf.— What council shall we take, Kolbein? Broddi is advancing rapidly.

Kolbein.— You, Asbjorn, will cross the mountains with a dozen men and advise my wife Helga to draw all guards from the west as fast as is at all possible. You yourself will continue your journey south over the Kjol to Hjalti, the son of the bishop to come north at once with all the men he can summon, to prevent difficulties here.

Asbjorn.— Indeed, a strenuous journey, now at the height of winter!

Kolbein.— Maintain the length of your days' journeys as if I were along myself, and be back at Flugumyr by the next Sunday. (*ASBJORN departs.*) But you, Haf, will take half of the company remaining, and take

position in the fortifications close by. The horses you will let into the fort. The other half you will let take position on the outside of the gates of the fort, so that we may leave it at our will. We shall hold the fortification until help comes to us, if need be. Let all undo the peace-straps* from their swords!

Haf.— I shall arrange all as you command. (*Departs.*)

Kolbein (to the BISHOP, who is about to leave).— Bide an instant, bishop! Remain here at my side! If it appears that Broddi's men show any hostilities towards me, I shall behead you here before the high altar.

Botolf (to himself).— Broddi's men! Are they so wise, I wonder? (*Aloud.*) You will permit me to speak with Kolbein Kaldajos, in order that he may adjust our difficulties.

Kolbein.— Are you thinking perhaps that he should come here with his men to take care of us?

Botolf.— Far from it. (*About to leave.*)

Kolbein (grasping the BISHOP by the wrist).— You will not go hence alive, sir bishop; if you stir the church will have another saint (*points to Bishop Gudmund's tomb*).

Botolf.— It would be a fair death for the servant of God. But unlikely it is that you will accomplish this deed of violence, because God's angels follow me wherever I go.

Kolbein.— I, too, have attendant wraiths; my victory at Orlygsstad, my pursuits of Thord Kakali, my raid to Reykholar, and my journey over Tvidægra Heath with thirty men.

Botolf.— Angels with black wings all, Kolbein!

Kolbein.— Whatever the hue of their wings, yet they cause me to come out of every fray unscathed and more powerful than other men.

Botolf.— God has hardened your heart, Kolbein!

Kolbein.— And you, cease to aid my cousin Brand and Broddi, and never release them from the interdict!

Botolf.— I have released them.

Kolbein.— That is an act of open hostility against me.

Botolf.— Whilst I am bishop I have the power of the keys, and not you.

Kolbein.— I have undone the gates of death for more men than I wished, and *that* power of the keys, I know, is not lies and wonders.

Botolf.— You have but one key, Kolbein, and that leads to hell. You will have need for it to open its gates when you arrive there; in case the Holy Church has not already opened them up for you.

Kolbein.— You threaten me with excommunication, bishop! Do not stir! Now I have decided what I shall do with you. Next summer I shall

* Straps wound round the sheath and fastened to a ring in the hilt.

put you bodily in a sack and bring it on a ship and send you thus to the archbishop.* (*Laughs heartily.*)

Botolf.—God is my castle.

Kolbein.—And you shall have both food and your power of the keys on top of you in your bag. That would teach Kakon and the archbishop to appoint fewer bishops from Norway who are chiefly busy plotting to betray Iceland. (*Laughs.*)

(*KOLBEIN KALDALJOS enters. The BISHOP breathes relieved.*)

Botolf.—You are an enemy of God, Kolbein the Young!

Kolbein.—No friend of the king, you meant to say.

Kolbein Kaldaljos.—Broddi has taken a stand at Vidiness with two hundred men. It seems he will order his troop there in battle array.

Botolf (to KOLBEIN THE YOUNG).—Your father's brother, Kolbein, fell at Vidiness, the same perchance may betide you.

Kolbein Kaldaljos.—Pledge a truce to me on behalf of my son Brand and his fellows.

Kolbein.—Brand holds no truce!

Kolbein Kaldaljos.—If you intend to slay my son you will find that Broddi and his men will stand between you and Brand for this once.

Kolbein.—Hear you, bishop, will you forbear aiding Brand and Broddi, if I now depart?

Botolf.—Never!

Kolbein.—Then shall I make the see at Holar even with the ground, as soon as I return.

Haf (entering hurriedly).—Broddi Thorleifsson has arranged his men in fighting order at Vidiness, and now they are advancing this way in battle array. I let our men mount their horses.

Kolbein.—You will follow me to Flugumyr, bishop. There are strong fortifications. But if Broddi's men pursue us, or make other show of hostility, I shall have you beheaded.

Haf.—Come, sir bishop.

Botolf (to KOLBEIN KALDALJOS).—If Kolbein commits such wickedness you shall let the 'Peace of God' be rung over all the land until next Monday evening; and then all the ill deeds he does meanwhile will become two-fold crimes.

Kolbein.—'God's peace'—hm! That is a new thing in this land! In that case I shall come after Monday and break to pieces 'Likabong' and the other bells of the cathedral; then you will have to cease ringing for a while, sir bishop.

Botolf.—Now the foul fiend talks through Kolbein's mouth.

Haf.—Come along with the foul fiend, sir!

*The archbishop of Nidaros (Thronhjelm), then primate of Norway.

Kolbein Kaldaljos.—The church needs men to guard it, the danger is greater than ever. Give me the watchword, sir bishop.

Botolf (aside to KOLBEIN KALDALJOS).—God is our castle!

Haf.—Come along, sir bishop!

Botolf (to himself).—Better I were a simple monk in Helgiseter cloister in Norway, than be a weak bishop and stand between the feuds of the chieftains of this land. But the king requested me.

(KOLBEIN THE YOUNG and HAF lead the BISHOP away between them.)

KOLBEIN KALDALJOS.—Oh the enormity to take the bishop prisoner in his own cathedral. And yet we have won the victory. I shall let the 'Peace of God' be rung out over the land, and that will protect the bishop from all danger and also give my son Brand time to collect his forces.

(Exit. The scene is empty a little while. Then BRODDI, ALF, and the other slayers of THOROLF enter hurriedly.)

Broddi.—Where is the bishop?

Alf.—I was told that Kolbein Kaldaljos was here. *(KOLBEIN KALDALJOS enters again.)*

Kolbein Kaldaljos.—You come too late, Broddi. Kolbein the Young has taken the bishop with him against his will to Flugumyr.

Broddi (aghast).—Unlike Kolbein to other men. Who could have thought of such an unheard-of thing?

Kolbein Kaldaljos.—And will kill the bishop, if you show any hostilities against Kolbein.

Alf.—Will kill the bishop? Whenever has the like been heard, to take a bishop out of his church against his will and threaten him with death! He will straightway be doomed to hell when he dies, but not before having made away with us all.

Broddi.—I have two hundred men. Kolbein has not even one hundred and will get no more before to-morrow evening. Who cares about the bishop's life? He will have to die some day. I shall ride after Kolbein with all my men, and the battle is won. Have you no message to me from the bishop?

Kolbein Kaldaljos.—He authorizes you to use the fortifications and wishes you to defend the see.

Broddi.—What do I need the fortifications now? I have twice as many men.

Kolbein Kaldaljos.—The bishop has ordered to set a guard over the see, and to ring out the 'Peace of God' over all the land.

Broddi (in furious wrath).—The hellish coward! So afraid he was for his life! A manifold crime it would be, then, if we attempt anything. Better had it been for us Northlanders if the archbishop had appointed a

dog to be our bishop! (*The watchword is taken up outside, first near by, then farther and farther away: 'God is our castle,' 'God is our castle,'—'is our castle,' 'our castle,'—'castle.' The cathedral bells begin ringing out the 'Peace of God.'* BRODDI rushes at KOLBEIN KALDALJOS.) Let them stop this ringing!

Kolbein Kaldaljos.—No, no, the bishop has commanded it.

Broddi (grips him with both hands at his shoulders and forces him on his knees).—Let them stop this ringing, wretch!

Kolbein Kaldaljos.—Hold the peace of the church, Broddi! I am an old man.

Broddi (letting go of KOLBEIN).—But a few moments ago our fight with Kolbein was altogether won, but now it is (*casts his steel glove on the floor*) altogether lost.

(*The ringing continues vigorously while the curtain drops.*)

ACT IV

(*The 'Little Hall' at Reynistad. Daytime. Enter LADY HELGA, JORUN, and her two sons, KALF, eight years, and THORGEIR, six years.*)

Jorun.—What do you need for your journey, lady? I do not know whether I can assist you, because there is no one but women at home.

Helga.—That knew I well that only women were at home. I need ice-spurs for my horse, or else he will fall under me and I lose life or limb.

Jorun.—You are welcome to our horseshoes as to all other things, lady.

Helga.—Harden well the ice-spurs for my horse, Haf. It seems to me that most iron is soft at Reynistad.

Haf.—It shall be done, lady! (*Exit.*)

Jorun.—Soft iron bends but does not break!

Helga.—Neither does it remain sharp long.

Jorun.—Are you finding fault with my husband and me because we observe the 'Peace of God'? I might easily let the women fetch so many of my servants as would be needed to take you and Haf prisoners.

Helga.—Yes, if we waited until they came. But let us drop this; rather show me your boys, because I should like to see what will become of them when they grow up.

Jorun.—There are but few that can see that in such small boys, excepting their own mother.

Helga (sits down and extends her hand).—Come to me, Kalf, my foster-son. (*KALF comes up to her.*) What do you want to be when you grow up? A bishop?

Kalf.—I want to become a great chieftain!

Helga.—What chieftain would you most want to be like?

Kalf.— The one who commands the greatest army.

Helga.— You want to command a great army, foster-son?

Kalf.— Yes, and be victorious in many battles.

Helga (*placing KALF on her knee*).— I think as before about my foster-son Half. In him you will bring up a man fit to be a chieftain, Jorun, though I know not how fit you are for that task.

Jorun.— My sons will have to be satisfied with such bringing up as I am able to give them.

Helga.— Which chieftain would you most like to be?

Kalf.— Kolbein the Young.

Helga.— Older people ought to say that! (*To THORGEIR.*) But what do you most like to become, little tot? (*THORGEIR comes up to her.*)

Thorgeir.— Like father. (*Puts a finger into his mouth.*)

Helga.— Do you want to be a priest?

Thorgeir.— I want to be like my papa. (*HELGA gazes at him; he retires behind his mother, concealing his face in her gown, and cries.*)

Jorun.— You must not make my boy cry, lady.

Helga.— You may keep that boy yourself. But give me your boy Kalf along to Flugumyr, for that would further reconciliations. I wish to be the mother of a chieftain.

Kalf.— Will you give me sword and helmet, and shield, then?

Helga.— Yes, my boy, a shield with an eagle on it.

Jorun.— A woman who herself has no children is not destined to be mother to a chieftain. My son Kalf shall never come into your hands whilst I live. I wish him to learn works of peace, and not warfare and slaughter.

Helga.— Let your Thorgeir be ordained priest, as kinsmen of yours have done. (*Stands KALF on the floor, getting up herself and stroking him on his head.*) But be careful to raise Kalf in such a manner that he become a successor to my husband and his father.

Jorun.— Go now, boys! (*The boys leave the room.*) You say that Kalf will be the successor of your husband and of his father?

Helga.— You know about the ill health of my husband Kolbein, which may take him away earlier than one might suspect. And yet it may be that Brand Kolbeinsson will not live even as long as he.

Jorun.— What is that you say? As a fact I know that Hjalti, the son of the bishop, is not coming from the South to settle our differences!

Helga (*laughs*).— He, the cod-biter! His men were all at the fishing-stations when Asbjorn arrived in the South. Hjalti is coming by no means, and my husband is raging at him.

Jorun.— You must have stirred up Kolbein the Young in this matter

as never before. Did you not drive home with the corpse of Thorolf, saying to him that there was life in him still; but when he took Thorolf out of your sleigh his head rolled about Kolbein's feet. Nor was that to be wondered at, considering the love that was between you and Thorolf.

Helga.—The slayers of Thorolf themselves incited me most.

Jorun.—And now it may appear to you as though not only Thorolf was to be avenged. Asbjorn fared South with eleven men and returned alone. He lost all men in the winter storms that have been raging now for some time. At last there were only six who returned over the Kjol, without food and worn out. Man after man threw himself down on the frozen ground to die; they cursed the wars that will not let men die in peace with God and men, they cursed Brand Kolbeinsson, and Broddi, and Kolbein the Young, because it is they who are the cause of this war.

Helga.—You say the truth about the journey of Asbjorn from the South. But I shall forget about all that, and shall procure the best terms for your husband from Kolbein, if you will give me your boy Kalf to foster and to let me bring him up. It has become rather solitary about me now at Flugumyr!

Jorun.—And you wish that I shall bring up my sons so that dying men shall curse them?

Helga.—You shall surrender the boy to me, whether you like it or no.

Jorun.—Then would I rather die!

Helga.—Weak spirit! My husband has promised me the life of a man in this feud, and also that I might choose who it shall be.

Jorun.—Then I *know* that it will be the life of my husband.

Helga.—You spoke of the love between me and Thorolf Bjarnason. I shall not deny it. Thorolf summoned your husband before the judgment of God before he was put to death. Now he is dead I can do nothing more pleasing to him than to see to it that Brand Kolbeinsson follow the summons in due time.

Jorun.—You are a devil, Helga! You dare to treat thus a chieftain as beloved as Brand Kolbeinsson?

Helga.—Loud you exclaim now, my lady! Yet I am better than you think me. If Brand is as beloved a chieftain as you make him out to be, somebody will surely be ready to die in his place; and that will I promise you that I shall give your husband full release, and kill *him* instead who offers himself to that end. (*She laughs.*)

Jorun.—You promise me that because you know full well that no one will do that.

Helga.—Is not Brand Kolbeinsson a beloved chieftain?

Jorun.— Yet you will stand by your word neither to me nor my husband.

Helga.— When did I ever fail to live up to my promise?

Jorun.— Did you never say that you would love your husband?

Helga.— When I was given to Kolbein I never once was asked whether I would love him, so that if I have been much lacking in this matter I have never deceived him in any way. Your husband may rest assured that if any one offer to die instead of so highly beloved a chieftain, then shall I take that man's life, and not Brand's.

Haf (coming in again).— Now your horse is provided with ice-spurs. Make haste; I see men riding this way. (*LADY HELGA and HAF depart.*)

Jorun (throwing up her hands in dismay).— And to-night the Peace of God is at an end! Holy mother of God! Rather extinguish the sun than let my husband be taken from me and put to death. Rather extinguish the sun than let this war continue. The earth does not deserve to exist when no one obeys the command of love and peace.

Brand (enters).— You are praying?

Jorun.— Lady Helga departed but this moment; she said to me that her husband had promised her the life of a man in this feud, and that she intended to choose yours.

Brand.— It is altogether uncertain as yet whether kinsman Kolbein will get power over my life.

Jorun.— Hjalti, the bishop's son, will not come to effect a settlement between you.

Brand.— I am not so sure whether we shall need him. Broddi has two hundred men, and if Deacon Sigurd and Helgi Skaftason manage to get any men it is likely that we shall have a greater host than kinsman Kolbein. (*SIGURD, deacon, enters. BRAND goes to meet him.*) You come late, deacon!

Sigurd.— I have been going about asking for help, as you bade me, and I may as well say in few words that no one will take up arms for you, excepting only your tenants, if you mean to begin hostilities against Kolbein the Young.

Brand.— That had I not expected.

Sigurd.— People are saying that the district is growing poor through warfare, that brothers, fathers, or sons lie buried on battlefields in all directions, and that they want to know where to look for their bones before more men are sent to their death.

Brand.— I have not been the cause of warring hitherto, and these same men will take to their arms by the hundreds, whenever Kolbein the Young summons them, and yet half of the lands he now rules are really mine.

Sigurd.— That I told them also; but I cannot tell you what they answered thereupon!

Brand.— You certainly must!

Sigurd.— They said that Kolbein had ever been victorious in war, but you never.

Brand (gloomy).— It is true, I have not been victorious!

(*HELGI SKAFTASON enters. BRAND goes to meet him.*)

Brand.— What tidings have you from the West?

Helgi (leaning wearily on his axe).— The weather has been very bad ——

Brand.— I know that! I know that!

Helgi.— I found the men on guard in the West. When I came to the first of them, the messengers of Lady Helga were there. Both they and the guards raised a great outcry against me, and I owe it to my horse and the storm that I escaped with my life. At the second and the third post it went the same way.

Brand.— And no one wanted to follow me?

Helgi.— They all said that you always suffered the most disgraceful reverses, while victory was perched on the helmet of Kolbein.

Brand.— I did not have the hardness and the ruthlessness of my kinsman Kolbein to kill men.

Jorun.— And it is better not to be ruthless.

Helgi.— I went to the peasants in the West, but got the worst reception. Often I did not even get food. I was allowed to stay over night only in the outhouses. At Bolstadahlid the hut burned down in which I slept. I do not know whether the farmer intended to burn me in it, but three armed men were standing outside when I made my escape from the fire. They did nothing to put out the fire, but neither did they attack me. Maybe that they were not minded to seek a night's shelter under my axe. After that I was not allowed to come into the house. I stood under the house wall during the remainder of the night, with my axe on my shoulder, and looking into the fire. Now I have come here!

Brand.— Our cause is altogether lost. Yeoman Thorvard tries to murder my messenger! (*Murmurs to himself.*) Thorolf said, 'He shall shun churches and Christian people, the houses of God and the houses of men, and every home but hell.'

Jorun.— You will have to fight against terrible odds.

Einar the Rich (enters with a pair of scales and a gold ring in his hand).— Now I shall ride home by the fastest and shall return within a short while with twenty men.

Brand.— That will be excellent, Einar. (*Exeunt BRAND and JORUN.*)

Einar.— Deacon Sigurd, what weighs the ring you wear on your arm there?

Sigurd.— Why do you ask?

Einar.— A ring has been paid me for a debt, and I want to weigh it now.

Sigurd.— My ring weighs four ounces.

Einar.— Mine was to weigh as much; let me have yours for a moment!

Sigurd (takes THOROLF'S ring off his arm and gives it to him).— But let me have it back at once!

Einar (weighs the rings. As soon as SIGURD looks away he exchanges the rings, handing SIGURD the other).— Thank you, deacon. Here is your ring! I am astonished that a priest should wear so precious a piece of gold on his arm.

Sigurd.— This ring is not my own. (*Puts it on.*)

Einar.— I did not know that. Farewell, friends! (*Exit.*)

Helgi Skafason (approaches closely to DEACON SIGURD).— I dreamed last night that I stood out of doors and looked up at the sky, and I thought I saw streams of blood run over all the sky. And down below on earth shone flames that licked up to the vault of heaven from all directions.

Sigurd.— You became aware in your sleep that the hut was burning about you.

Helgi.— No! I dreamed this dream three times, and awoke each time and never became aware of the fire. The end of the dream was most terrible and always the same.

Sigurd.— And what was the end of it?

Helgi.— Meseemed Thorolf Bjarnason drowned me in blood, and then I awoke and thought I was in hell.

Sigurd.— Put no faith in that hellish dream. You dreamed about the end of the world.

Helgi.— Yes, my world is at an end. The eyes of Lady Helga marked me for death, when I dried the blade of my axe on the fringes of her veil.

Sigurd.— That was indeed a most unfortunate act!

Helgi.— Thorolf had been her lover for many years.

Sigurd.— I do not know about that. I am not her father confessor.

Sigurd.— No. She has the father devil as father confessor, but not you.

Sigurd.— You speak ill of so great a lady.

Helgi.— And I shall have to sell my life and salvation as dearly as I ever may. (*Sobs.*) Help me, deacon, I sink, I sink!

Sigurd (taking his ring off his arm).— Take this ring! And ride at once to Flugumyr and give it to Lady Helga, with this last message from Thorolf Bjarnason that you shall have peace for life and limb, although you have slain him.

Helgi.— That ring? That is the ring of Einar the Rich!

Sigurd.— Ah, the wretch stole the right ring, and now he has ridden away! Holy Mother of God, then I know not what to do for you!

Helgi (close to him, as before).— I shall not live more than three days, and then I shall awake in the place I dreamed of. Deacon, as sure as you want to be saved yourself, read masses for my soul when I am dead.

Sigurd.— I shall, depend on it. It may be your dream signifies the fall of that chieftain whom you shall harm most. I dreamed (*BRAND and JORUN appear behind them*), that night when I lodged at Sauda—I dreamed three times in succession that Brand Kolbeinsson stood at my bedside and said, ‘Domine Jesu Christe, accipe spiritum meum!’

Helgi.— And what mean these words?

Sigurd.— My Lord Jesus Christ, receive thou my soul!

Jorun (throwing her arms about BRAND).— Never let such dreams trouble you, my dear husband. (*The others are startled by her words.*)

Brand.— Thorolf prophesied to me that I would not have a priest near me when I was put to death.

Jorun.— That prophecy shall not come true, in case you really should suffer a sudden death now. Come into the church, deacon, and shrive me and my husband.

Sigurd.— Come along with us into the church, Helgi Skaftason! For it is the last refuge of every man.

Helgi.— I want to have my food, and no consecrated host! And when I am done eating it is better I should see how the watches are kept. Never forget those masses, deacon!

(*All depart. After a little while KALF and THORGEIR poke their heads in and enter, when they see that the room is empty.*)

Kalf.— Nobody here; come now, we are going to play.

Thorgeir.— Yes, play great, big men!

Kalf.— Father is going to fight against Kolbein the Young now, and Broddi with him. Will you be Broddi?

Thorgeir.— No, I want to be papa!

Kalf.— Then you want to be what I wanted to be; so I shall be Kolbein the Young. So, now let’s begin.

Thorgeir.— Yes, and I am papa.

Kalf.— Now first we have got to fight one another.

Thorgeir.— No. Because I am papa!

Kalf (commands).— Draw up your forces in battle array, Brand Kolbeinsson! Come now, Geiri, and play with me; we must fight now!

Thorgeir.— You are out of your mind! Why do you want to rush at

me? I who am father? (*Kneels down in the background, folding his hands over his breast, looking down and moving his lips.*)

Kalf.—Why, don't you remember that I am Kolbein the Young? Now the battle begins! (*Commanding.*) Order your troops, Brand Kolbeinsson! Defend yourself! Are you running and hiding yourself now, Brand Kolbeinsson?

Thorgeir.—No, I am in church and saying my prayers.

Kalf.—I shall teach you saying prayers when you are to fight with me! (*Angrily.*) Now I am dragging you out of church, Brand Kolbeinsson. (*Grasps him and drags him out to the middle of the floor. THORGEIR remains on his knees.*) There, now you have got out of church!

Thorgeir.—No, papa is still in the church!

Kalf.—Now you are out of it! Cut off his head, Helgi Skaftason! (*Grasps THORGEIR by his shoulder and lifts up his other hand.*)

Thorgeir (*still kneeling*).—Are you out of your mind? Do you want to kill me, who am papa — and I — while I am in church, — and — and — and I — while I am saying my prayers?

Kalf (*lifting up his hand*).—Cut off his head, Helgi Skaftason!

Thorgeir (*as before, weeping*).—Mamma! Mamma! Mamma!

Kalf (*stamping, with commanding voice*).—Cut off his head, Helgi Skaftason! (*Enter JORUN. THORGEIR is weeping.*)

Jorun.—What are you doing there, boys? Why are you crying, Thorgeir?

Kalf.—We are playing here.

Thorgeir (*tearfully*).—He wants to cut my head off,—I who am papa, and in church, and praying.

Kalf.—Yes, and I was Kolbein the Young, and wanted to have Helgi Skaftason behead him — just in play.

Jorun.—Don't cry any more, my boy. (*Caresses THORGEIR.*) And you, Kalf, do you want to have your father beheaded in your game? No more such games! (*Slaps KALF.*)

Kalf.—You slap me? I who am Kolbein the Young? So you think he will allow himself to be slapped with impunity by a woman?

Jorun.—How does this lion's whelp come among us? I had rather not live than bring up rovers. Never more play war, Kalf! Protect those that are weak! (*Embraces THORGEIR, leads the boys to the door, and calls out:*) Put Kalf into the dark room for a while!

Brodidi (*shouts from without*).—I must get to speak with you, Brand Kolbeinsson! Quick, quick!

Jorun.—Brodidi here! There comes war incarnate mailed from head to foot. May God have pity on all wives!

(*Enter BRAND without arms and BRODDI all armed.*)

Broddi.— You have collected a good and well-armed body of men?

Brand.— I have had great difficulty in gathering troops. I have only my tenants and my servants, altogether eighty men.

Broddi.— And whilst I make the fort at Holar unconquerable, whilst I break up the frozen ground, whilst I pour water over all the ramparts of our stronghold so that they become like slippery ice — meanwhile you have done nothing. You sing hymns in the churches, beat your breast, and chant ‘Miserere.’ Your conduct is not becoming a chieftain.

Jorun.— You speak harshly to my husband because he wants peace before all things.

Broddi.— Peace! Whoever heard of peace after violent dissensions, except the battles be won or — lost?

Brand.— You know, Broddi, that I egged on neither you nor others to take Thorolf Bjarnason’s life. And yet have I done all in my power to collect many men. I sent Deacon Sigurd and Helgi Skaftason —

Broddi.— The priest and the executioner? — and, of course, only these two?

Brand.— Yes, I had but few men at home, at that time.

Broddi.— You do not know how to get a body of men together! You send the priest with the crucifix in his hand. All know that he wishes peace, and no one rises for him. You send the hangman with the axe on his shoulder to remind people of his business, but you forget that with such a fellow no one will speak. In such wise you will not get a pack of dogs to follow you. But if you want to raise a great host you will have to go out yourself with sixty men and kill two or three of the first that refuse to follow you. Thus did Kolbein the Young collect his troops at first, and because Kalf Guttormsson would not bear arms against Sighvat, his good friend, both he and his son were slain.

Jorun.— How often the murder of my father and brother is mentioned, and no one cares though I hear it.

Brand.— I have been heavily oppressed with care. I have been summoned before the tribunal of God because of having violated a pledged truce; and my kinswoman Helga will be intent on making me follow that summons. And now the priest in my house has dreamed thrice in the same night that I stood by his bedside and prayed God to receive my soul.

Broddi.— Dreams signify nothing. The summons you talk about I think nothing but old women’s notions. The tribunal of arms is the one I believe in; they are to decide between us and Kolbein the Young.

Brand.— Is it your opinion that we can overcome my kinsman Kolbein with less force than he has himself?

Broddi.— The fortifications at Holar are impregnable now. Together with your men we have more than three hundred men, and I have moved victuals into the fort from the bishop's residence which ought to last us for three weeks.

Brand.— You have robbed the bishop's see!

Broddi.— No, I have come by the victuals in an honest manner. You know that warriors may take as their own all food they find. I should like to see my brother-in-law Kolbein attack us by scaling these ramparts of ice, and see his men tumble down from above, and the ice coloring red under them.

Jorun.— My husband shudders at that sport; he is sick in his soul.

Broddi (seizing BRAND).— There is no time now to have a sick soul. We shall have to fight. As soon as my brother-in-law Kolbein has made an onset at our fort and lost many men he will himself see fit to obtain conditions of peace from us.

Brand.— That will he never!

Broddi.— Maybe, maybe.

Brand.— It will cost many lives to attack and defend Holar this time. Ought we to sacrifice them all merely to lengthen our own lives by a few years?

Broddi.— Lives? Worth, each, one or two hundred ounces of silver! Brand, you do not know the joy there is in fighting! Every man in the fort has sworn to fall at his post. And I shall spare no effort, so that he who will set down an account of it will be able to say with truth that our last defence was the most glorious ever told of in sagas, and that the fame thereof shall last while there live men in this land.

Brand.— I shall come to Holar, unless I find better counsel which you approve of.

(ALF OF GROF, DEACON SIGURD, and HELGI SKAFTASON lead in the CLERK HELGI between them. He has a bandage over his eyes.)

The Clerk Helgi.— Pax vobiscum! May Brand Kolbeinsson hear my voice?

Brand.— He is here.

Helgi.— What other persons are here?

Brand.— Broddi Thorleifsson and Jorun, my wife!

Helgi.— It is without the knowledge of Kolbein the Young and to bear word from Bishop Botolf that I am here. Will all of you keep silent about my coming here?

All.— Yes.

Helgi.— Then take the bandage from my eyes!

Broddi.— No. What happenings are there at Flugumyr?

Helgi.—I am no spy. My errand is to hand you the bishop's letter, Brand Kolbeinsson. (*Holds out the parchment, which BRAND seizes.*)

Brand.—Have you other messages besides?

Helgi.—No! (*Stretches forth both his hands.*) Give me your hands, my sons. (*BRAND and BRODDI clasp them.*) The very next time Asbjorn Illugason meets you, Broddi, he means to exchange blows with you.

Broddi.—Glad I am that Kolbein, my brother-in-law, at least does not bid some contemptible wretch to dispatch me. (*HELGÍ SKAFTASON leads out the CLERK HELGÍ.*) The bishop's letter! The bishop's letter!

Sigurd (reads).—Botolf of Holar, a poor servant of the Holy Church and prisoner at Flugumyr, sends to Brand Kolbeinsson and his friends God's greetings and his. Pax vobiscum! You and your companions are not to put overmuch trust in the fortifications of Holar, because from the church, the dwelling house, and outhouses in the inclosure there lead secret passages into them which are known to Kolbein the Young, but not to me.

Broddi.—And that he could not have told us before, the hell-hound!

Sigurd (reads).—Through the eggings on of Helga his wife, Kolbein is now become so frantic and furious that some of my clerks think he cannot suffer the sound of a bell. He has threatened to break down the fort of Holar, to spare no one, and has promised his Lady Helga the life of a man, whomever she will choose.

Broddi (laughs).—I wonder whether she will have my life?

Brand.—No. It will be my life she desires.

Jorun.—She shall never have it.

Alf.—My head she wants, the vixen!

Helgi.—I need not guess *whose* life it will be.

Sigurd (continues).—But I fear that the mercy of God will most readily fall to your share if all the men who were present at the slaying of Thorolf submit themselves unconditionally to Kolbein before the 'Peace of God' is at an end; then I would hope that you will be fortunate enough to pacify Kolbein's mind, so that full reconciliation may be obtained, of which Kolbein also stands in great need because of Thord Kakali and the King. Valete!

Brand.—The counsel of the bishop will be the best for all of us. The slayers of Thorolf Bjarnason ought not to jeopardize other men's life to save their own. Lady Helga has told my wife that she meditated my death, because of the slaying of Thorolf; and though I have but little incited you to the deed, so that it may be said to have been done against my will even, yet will I for the welfare of the district rather give myself up to Kolbein and suffer death, than that many men should lose their lives because of us;

and rather than that my kinsman Kolbein should be routed by Thord Kakali through the insurrection which I and Broddi have raised against him. (*Silence.*)

Sigurd.— Spoken like a man, Brand Kolbeinsson! (*Exit JORUN.*)

Broddi.— We have sworn to each other not to separate before that this our cause was entirely brought to an end; now I see your highmindedness, Brand Kolbeinsson, as I have seen it before. The bishop has torn from under me my trust in the fort. Hence I shall take that council to fare to Flugumyr with you, whilst I maintain that it is entirely doubtful as yet who is to die, Kolbein the Young, Brand, or I; but that I think sure, also, that short time will pass between the death of any one of us three.

Alf.— Let all of us go to Flugumyr and surrender to Kolbein. Will you not go with us, Helgi Skaftason?

Helgi.— No one can escape his fate. I shall do what Brand does. But it is certain death for me!

Broddi.— Let us go then! (*Enter JORUN with KALF and THORGEIR.*)

Jorun.— Say farewell to your father, my boys! He intends to start on the longest journey in this world.

Kalf (going up to his father).— Do you mean to go to war now, father?

Brand (lifts him up and kisses him).— Your mother said I intended to start on the longest journey in this world.

Kalf.— Then you intend to start out to Rome. That I do not mean to do, once I am a chieftain. (*BRAND sets him down on the floor again.*)

Brand.— It may be that I come to Rome; but that Rome lies high aloft. (*KALF goes up to BRODDI.*) Now you come to me, Thorgeir! (*THORGEIR goes up to him. He takes him on his lap.*) Don't weep, my little boy, if I be late returning to-morrow.

Thorgeir.— Don't go away from me, father! Let the others go to war, but you remain at home yourself!

Brand.— No, I cannot stay here; if I remain here there will be fighting here and killing of men; but if I go I shall return with peace.

Thorgeir.— Oh yes! Peace is good, let me have it when you return, so I can put it into my toy box. I will not break it at all.

Broddi.— The boy is right. All the peace that now exists in Iceland may be put into a linen chest.

Brand (kisses the boy and sets him down).— Yes, keep it well, my boy. If you obtain it you will never have to start out on the journey that I now must take.

Kalf.— You are not going to Rome, Broddi?

Broddi.— No. Not just now!

Kalf.— You are going to war, Broddi! I wish I were grown up, too!

Broddi.— I should like, if I might, strike one great blow, before going to Rome with your father.

Kalf.— And let that blow become far famed, Broddi!

(*JORUN leads the boys out. They go to the door. Some depart.*)

Jorun.— Have you nothing to say to me, my husband, before going?

Brand.— Do not weep when I am gone. (*They embrace each other closely.*) Make our sons love peace! And always think that I have said that to you which you most wish I had said to you.

(*All except DEACON SIGURD and JORUN leave.*)

Jorun.— Now I declare myself in league with the holy queen Maria, as did Guttorm, my brother, before he was slain! (*Approaches SIGURD.*) I shall travel with you to Flugumyr to try whether I may save the life of my husband.

Broddi.— What may a woman effect in such a great feud? It will be a most perilous journey. Who knows what may happen there!

Jorun.— The life of my husband is more precious to me than my own. But I need a man's clothes, deacon, and then let us ride after the others. Lend me the garments of your son who died when half grown. Permit me to wear them on the journey, so that no one may recognize me at Flugumyr.

Sigurd (drying a tear).— You are welcome to the boy's clothes.

Jorun.— And that you will have to promise me, deacon, to let no one know who I am, whatever happen.

Sigurd (hands her a key, wiping off a tear).— I promise it. The boy's clothes lie in my chest under my vestments. Take them and may they help you, Lady Jorun, you blessed woman!

Jorun.— There is still more to do, deacon. While I get myself ready, you are to tell the stewardess that she is to give the servant girls and men servants the food they choose to have, and as much and as good food as if it were prepared for a banquet.

Sigurd.— It does not seem to me, though, as if any festival were at hand this evening.

Jorun.— Do as I bid you! Probable it is that this will be the last time that I have prepared food for my servants. (*She takes the crucifix from her neck, hangs it upon a chair and kneels down before the cross. DEACON SIGURD looks at her awhile, then leaves the room in all stillness.*)

(*Curtain*)

ACT V

(*The 'Great Hall' at Flugumyr, with raised seats along both walls and a dais at the gable end. The entrance door is at the right, in the side wall towards*

the background. The upper part of the walls is draped with hangings, the lower part with shields hung up. Along the side walls are benches; two high seats in the foreground on either side; in front of the higher one a little table. In the middle of the dais is the seat of LADY HELGA, with benches behind it. The evening candles are lit on all sides.) (HELGA and SALVOR.)

Helga.— You do well to take a part of the domestic work off my shoulders.

Salvor.— You have been very kind to me, Lady Helga.

Helga.— To-morrow early I need breakfast for five hundred men.

Salvor.— All hands are at work, lady!

Helga.— To-morrow the chieftains are to do battle; have you bandages enough ready? A good physician is worth half an army.

Salvor.— There will not be any want of bandages. (*She embraces HELGA, half weeping.*) Let the chieftains make peace, lady!

Helga.— That would amount to humbling my husband! (*Seats herself on her chair on the dais.*) Bishop Botolf has promised to sit with us in the hall here to-night; have two tapers, large and thick, placed on the table in front of the high seat.

(*EINAR THE RICH enters hurriedly and runs up on the dais. He lays his head on the knees of LADY HELGA. SALVOR shrieks in fright.*)

Einar.— I am bringing you my head, lady!

Helga.— Why shriek so, Salvor?— Who are you?

Einar.— I am Einar of Vik.

Helga.— Good is your gift, and I shall gladly accept it! Salvor! Ask Asbjorn Illugason to come here. I desire that he shall behead Einar the Rich. (*Exit SALVOR.*)

Einar (quickly takes THOROLF's ring from his arm).— Spare my life; for God's sake, mercy, mercy, mercy!

Helga.— You shall obtain the same mercy as did Thorolf Bjarnason!

Einar.— Do you know this ring, lady?

Helga (attentively looking at the ring).— That ring I know; did you steal it from the body of Thorolf?

Einar.— Steal? As rich a man as I am? No, Thorolf bade me give you this ring, lady, with this message —

Helga (approaching him, eagerly).— What message? What message? Was that just before he was slain?

Einar.— Yes, just before that!

Helga.— And the message? Are you tongue-tied?

Einar.— That I should be spared, life and limb, although I had been among his assailants.

Helga.— Did Thorolf mention any others to be spared beside you?

Einar.— No, none!

Helga.— The ring is the right sign. If Thorolf has forgiven you, why should I not do likewise? (*Leads him out.*) Wait here in that corner; I shall spare you.

Asbjorn (comes in hurriedly).— Are you in danger, lady?

Helga.— No. A man's life was given me which I did not wish to take, though.

Asbjorn.— I feared it might be some attack by Broddi and his men.

Helga.— Broddi will soon become peacefully inclined. (*Enter KOLBEIN THE YOUNG, BISHOP BOTOLF in his pontifical robes, HAF, and SALVOR, bearing two big, stout tapers which are lit. The hall becomes half filled with armed men.*)

Botolf.— Pax tecum, filia!

Helga (bows before the bishop and leads him to the higher seat of honor).— Be seated on this higher seat of honor this evening, my lord. To-morrow an army of my husband's will accompany you to Holar and re-establish you in your see, as soon as we shall have driven from thence Broddi's and Brand's troop of rebels.

Botolf.— A captive bishop is content to be seated on the lower high seat, my daughter!

Helga.— As you wish, my lord. (*Leads him to the lower seat of honor, where he is seated. SALVOR moves the table to the lower high seat and puts the tapers upon it. Most of the men are sitting; drink-horns and ale are brought in.*)

Kolbein (is given a drinking-horn, BOTOLF another, from whom they are passed on from man to man. KOLBEIN seats himself on the higher seat of honor).— There is courage in our men; they all are minded to do battle in order to be rid of that horde of rebels.

Botolf.— You take much power upon yourself, Kolbein, to begin war and kill so many men without law and its decrees.

Kolbein.— Why do you speak thus, my lord? You freed the slayers of Thorolf from the interdict; and yet they slew him without the law and its decrees.

Botolf.— It is a labor of love for the Holy Church to pardon the guilty. We do it for God's sake.

Kolbein.— And it is the task of chieftains to administer the laws themselves, and to begin hostilities in order to make others submit to their will. (*The horns pass around until HAF has finished reciting his lay.*)

Botolf.— An ill task and a disastrous one. To me it seems that parliamentought to administer the laws and pronounce judgment according to them.

Kolbein.— We chieftains have all power over law and decrees in parliament. It would only delay sentence to seek a decision there.

Botolf.—It has come to my ears that Brand Kolbeinsson owns by rights the greater part of the dominions you now govern, and that, for this reason, you are not rightfully chieftain here.

Kolbein.—I, as well as Brand, am of the race of Asbjorn, and Sighvat Sturluson put me in possession of the land when I was but fifteen years old.

Botolf.—And therefore had you Sighvat and his sons killed in the battle of Orlygsstad.

Kolbein.—Sighvat wanted to lure my constituents from me by his wiles. The yeomen chose me their chieftain twenty years ago, and ever since I have performed, now this, now that deed, so that the yeomen would not choose another chieftain in my stead. Therefore is it right that I should be chieftain here. But to my ears it has come that you, my lord, have not lawfully come to be bishop at Holar!

Helga (drinks from the horn and smiles).—To your health, sir bishop!

Botolf (responds after a while to her toast).—You astonish me! The archbishop appointed me!

Kolbein.—No one becomes lawfully bishop of Holar until we of the North Quarter have chosen him. And you we have not chosen, my lord! You are bishop here as long as I will, and no longer. Another matter it is that I shall do all to be at peace with the Holy Church, because the days of my life are probably counted.

Botolf.—I have now learned how strong your desire for peace is, Kolbein.

Helga.—Remember, my lord, that Kolbein thought it a matter of necessity that you should be his guest for a few days. I have treated you as well, sir, as my work would permit me and you would accept.

Botolf.—And yet they say that you more than any other were cause of the state of war that now exists, and that your flattering of me is but dissimulation.

Helga.—They are my enemies who tell you that, sir bishop! (*HELGA leaves her seat. ASBJORN, who has been speaking with a man, approaches her. They converse together in subdued voice in the foreground.*)

Asbjorn.—Shall I tell Kolbein that Brand Kolbeinsson is riding to Flugumyr with eleven followers?

Helga.—No! Remember Helgi Skaftason, should he come with Brand.

Asbjorn.—Come he will if he is fated to death.

Helga.—Is Broddi along?

Asbjorn.—He is likely to be at Holar in the fort.

Helga (goes to her seat. Raises her voice). There is no cheer here tonight. Haf! Have you no song to recite or some tale to tell?

Haf (*advancing to middle of floor*).— I have put together a little song about the present feud.

Helga.— Let men hear it, *Haf*!

Haf.— Hither I see the ravens winging,
 They steer their flight to Holar's steeple
 On their errand bent death bringing;
 Hard the bishop's bells are ringing:
 Longest peals great Likabong:*
 'The Peace of God shall save the people.'

Heroes head their warlike forces,
 Mailed fists 'gainst shields are clashing,
 Over Herad's water-courses
 Thunder thousand hoofs of horses,
 Over fords and bridges dashing.
 Long afar moans Likabong.

Death foretells the cock's dawn-greeting:
 Many a fey man's fair limbs mangles
 Soon the sword and spear in meeting.
 Hot the Northland blood is beating!
 Low and dull weeps Likabong.
 The shiv'ring Southron sea-cod angles.

Helga.— Excellent! That's aimed at *Hjalti*, the son of the bishop,— the cod-biter!

Haf.— Peace,— how many a foe will crave her!
 In Woden's spoor the sward is bloody —
 Many a head the swords dissever;
 Be our host victorious ever!
 Silent lastly Likabong —
 Women weep for men once ruddy.

Botolf.— Little your skald's song contributes to the honor of the Church as it seems to me, Lady *Helga*.

Helga (*lifts the drinking-horn to her lips; the bishop responds in silence*).— To your health, sir bishop! When at Oddi I listened to the opinions of Snorri Sturluson and of Sæmund, my father, about poetics, but I doubt whether they would have thought that *Haf* had said ought derogatory to the Holy Church, in particularly mentioning in the burthen what Likabong does.

Botolf.— I shall not discuss the more hidden meanings; but in the last stanza Likabong certainly is silent with shame.

* 'Lyke-knell,' name of the great bell of the Holar Cathedral.

Helga.— Far from it, sir bishop! Likabong is Moses, who is praying with outstretched arms whilst Josua is giving battle. When the battle is won his hands drop with weariness.

Botolf (to KOLBEIN THE YOUNG).— Likabong did not weep when you fled from Broddi and the Holy Church at Holar, which was preparing to resist worldly insolence.

Kolbein.— No, excepting it shed tears at having to part with its bishop in such headlong haste!

Helga.— I had heard before that the 'Peace of God' which the bishop let be pealed over the land had saved us from complete rout at the beginning of the feud. But now I hear for the first time that my husband fled before Broddi and the Holy Church of Holar.

Kolbein.— Never did I flee, but at that occasion I was forced to avoid trouble. (*Advances on the floor and mounts with one foot on the dais on which HELGA is seated.*) Here I place my foot on the beam and make a vow that I shall never flee before Broddi Thorleifsson. (*Returns to his seat.*)

Asbjorn.— And here I place my foot on the beam and make a vow that if battle there will be I shall exchange blows with Broddi Thorleifsson until one of us fall dead.

Helga.— Well spoken, Asbjorn!

Haf (comes from the door).— Brand Kolbeinsson is approaching with an armed band.

Kolbein.— Is my kinsman beside himself?

Helga.— To arms! To arms!

Kolbein (laughs).— Why, it seems as if the people of Oddi want to enter the fray!

Helga.— You have forgotten, my husband, that my father threw down the glove single-handed to all the burghers of Bergentown, because of the drowning of my brother Paul.

(*The men are standing with drawn swords along both sides of the hall, leaving a lane in the middle. BRAND, BRODDI, ALF, and the other slayers of THOROLF pass up it. LADY JORUN in a man's apparel and DEACON SIGURD follow them. Last of all HELGI SKAFTASON.*)

Helga.— There we see each other again, Helgi Skaftason! (*Points down with the thumb of her right hand. HELGI is killed and dragged out without the other slayers of THOROLF becoming aware of it. EINAR THE RICH enters again with the men of KOLBEIN, who dragged out HELGI. He joins the band of BRAND. The axe of HELGI remains lying on the spot where he fell.*)

Brand.— Hail, Kolbein kinsman!

Broddi.— Hail, brother-in-law! What truce shall we have?

Helga.— The same as had Thorolf Bjarnason!

Broddi.— I care not to quarrel with women about my life!

Helga.— It is too late for the fox to fight for life, once he has gone into the trap.

Kolbein.— Why, Brand Kolbeinsson, did you attack and slay Thorolf, our friend?

Broddi.— I did more to incite men to that than did Brand Kolbeinsson, and we offer to atone for his slaying with much money, if you are willing.

Helga.— More will be needful than only money.

Brand.— I thought there was great necessity to do away with Thorolf.

Helga.— 'Perjured men, murder-wolves.'* Jorun, your wife, egged you on to take revenge for her father and her brother.

Brand.— It is entirely untrue that my wife Jorun egged me on to revenge either her father or brother, even if men have told you so, Kolbein. About absent people most things can be told. But for this reason was Thorolf deprived of life, because you had set him as chieftain over the Eyafirth, to succeed you.

Kolbein.— Never did I do that!

Brand.— Helga, your wife, affirmed that you had done so.

Helga.— Certainly you did, my husband. But, well it may be that at the time you were not in full possession of your senses.

Einar.— I heard it, my lord, how you set Thorolf chieftain over Eyafirth. And so no one dare blame Lady Helga for having misheard or misstated the matter.

Sigurd.— You here, Einar the Rich!

Brand.— Notwithstanding Thorolf's low descent you gave him preference over chieftains, you gave him authority over men, and you let him journey with you to Rome. No peacemaker was your Thorolf among men; but a bad companion he was, and me he nicknamed.

Kolbein.— All that has Thorolf atoned for with his life. Why, Broddi, did you attack my friend Thorolf?

Broddi.— I am your brother-in-law, Kolbein, and I owed it to you to avenge insults heaped upon you. Long had he been faithless to you and cunningly served both you and been a treacherous follower to you both here and abroad.

Helga.— Easy it is to perceive that Thorolf no longer dwells among the living since he is thus slandered. For this reason you killed him, because you thought Kolbein to be dead and that Eyafirth had gotten too brave a leader in him.

Brand.— It casts no good light upon you, my lady, to praise Thorolf Bjarnason thus highly!

Kolbein.— And what moved you, Alf, to attack Thorolf, my friend?

*Quotation from the Eddic poem Voluspo.

Alf.— My hatred of the dog!

Helga.— Little hope I see of a reconciliation. One of Thorolf's slayers dried his blood on the fringes of my veil. And you, Alf of Grof, you reviled me like the worst witch; you wanted to have a sack pulled over my head.

Kolbein (furious).— Boor! — have a sack pulled over her! A sack,— you devilish fiend! What did you cattle mean? I shall have your skin flayed off you and pull it over your ears after you are dead! I shall never make peace with Alf of Grof!

Helga.— A loutish rustic should never take part in the dealings of men of great account!

Alf.— I offer all my property as ransom!

Broddi.— Silence, you coward — all your property!

Alf.— Have I no right to live, if I can?

Helga.— I cannot see what use there is in your living, Alf!

Kolbein.— Alf of Grof and I shall never be reconciled.

Brand.— I journeyed hither with Thorolf's slayers in order to reach an agreement with you. If it be not your will to accept reconciliation with us, I demand that you hand over to me possession of all those districts that are mine by rights, so that I in that manner may obtain sufficient resources to be able to sustain the fine which you will impose on us for the slaying.

Helga.— Now it is clear that your men have no scruples to kill each the other, but will by no means be ready to atone for it. With demands such as these, Brand Kolbeinsson foregoes all chance of reaching an agreement. You promised me a man's life in this feud, Kolbein. Take Brand's life, then, and that will take away the inclination for further rebellion against you. (*Silence.*)

Botolf.— And you intend to take Brand's life, when the Peace of God is at an end?

Kolbein.— For the welfare of our Quarter I know no better counsel than that which Lady Helga has given.

Helga.— Less cause even there was against Kalf Guttormsson, and yet has he been mouldering in his grave these ten years. Asbjorn and Haf, seize hold of my kinsman Brand!

Sigurd.— I have heard that you would spare Brand Kolbeinsson's life if another man were willing to die for him.

Helga.— I did make that condition. (*Laughs.*) Will you fulfill it, deacon?

Sigurd.— No. Because I know you will show no mercy.

Jorun (leaps up on the dais and lays her head on HELGA's knee).— Take my life instead of Brand Kolbeinsson's life.

Helga.— You are out of your senses, lad!

Jorun (arises, looking at LADY HELGA).— You cut close to me ten years ago; take now my life also!

Helga (shades her eyes).— You were beheaded ten years ago! Has the lad Guttorm Kalfsson risen from his grave?

Kolbein.— Do we see apparitions in the light?

Broddi (to BRAND).— How did your wife Jorun come among our company? (*BRAND leaps up on the dais and carries JORUN down on his arm. About all the hall men are heard to say in a low voice, 'LADY JORUN.' While she is being carried down to the floor she extends her arms toward HELGA.*)

Jorun.— Take my life as you have taken my father's and my brother's; then you need fear no longer that I am egging on my kinsmen to avenge me on you. (*BRAND sets her down on the floor. They embrace each other fervently.*)

Helga.— Of little worth I hold your life, Jorun; but in order to keep my promise I shall take it instead of your husband's life. (*Calls out.*) Take my prisoner away from Brand Kolbeinsson!

Broddi.— Let us protect her with our bodies!

Brand.— Look you, Helga my kinswoman, you will not reach your prisoner so very easily for the first. (*DEACON SIGURD picks up HELGI SKAFTASON's axe, for he is weaponless. They take JORUN in their midst.*)

Helga.— To arms! Wrest my prisoner from among them!

Broddi.— Hold my place for a moment, my men, if it should be vacant a short while.—Is it really so, Kolbein the Young, that your wife has made you so senselessly mad that you are about to attack us in order to butcher a woman?

Kolbein.— Lady Helga's matter this is, not mine. If we cannot reach terms of peace, it is because of Helgi Skaftason and Alf of Grof!

Broddi.— And you let her attack us in order to butcher a woman?

Kolbein.— I let it come as it may.

Broddi.— Then more will have to come as it may. Be on your guard, Kolbein!

(*KOLBEIN has been sitting in his high seat without drawing his sword, but has had it lying on his knees and now and then unsheathed it halfways. BRODDI rushes at him to deliver a blow; KOLBEIN dodges the blow and grasps BRODDI's wrist with both hands, so that his sword drops on the floor. Then he forces BRODDI to sit beside him on the high seat.*)

Kolbein.— Be calm now, Broddi! The slaying of Thorolf was an ill deed and a needless one.

Broddi.— Let go of me, you hell-hound!

Kolbein (laughs).— How furious you are now, brother-in-law!

Helga.—What fell there to the floor?

Kolbein.—The action for avenging Thorolf Bjarnason, which slipped from your hands, lady!

Helga.—That would not have made so great a sound.

Brand.—Lady Helga! you who once were my mother's sister! I shall surrender my arms and myself to you if all others will then be granted to make atonement for the slaying of Thorolf.

Helga.—Keep your arms yourself, for no one does less harm with them than you. My promise to your wife I shall keep; I wonder only that she goes not herself voluntarily from among your midst, in order to save us difficulties.

Jorun.—I cannot, for they hold me.

Helga (calls out).—Fetch my captive Jorun from among them! (*HAF ASBJORN and the men of KOLBEIN surround BRAND and his followers.*)

Asbjorn.—We shall set upon you now!

Botolf.—Bide a little. (*Takes the candles from the table.*) Now I shall lay in the Norse language the interdict on Kolbein and Helga.

Helga.—Say what you please, bishop. But you will have to revoke your interdict before you go from hence.

Botolf.—That shall I never. No priest shall ever say service for you, and you shall have no lasting dwelling place but hell. (*Holds the candles with the flame downward.*)

Helga.—Haf, you stand near enough to the bishop! Gag him with the end of your spear.

Kolbein (jumps up without letting go of BRODDI).—Hear me, sir bishop! Desist from laying the interdict on me, because not far is the time when I shall need the mercy of God and his Holy Church. Lady Helga has been insulted in such fashion as no high-born lady would endure. But I, for my part, shall be ready to make atonement for the insult offered by her to you and the Holy Church now for the first time.

Botolf.—Easy it is to reach an agreement with me, Kolbein, if this larger matter which you have been warring about so long could be settled to-night to the satisfaction of all.

Kolbein.—Then hear my decision: For the murder of Thorolf Bjarnason. I decree a fine of eighteen marks silver, and also that those men who may have fallen as part of the vengeance for Thorolf shall not be atoned for.

Brand.—Agreed, kinsman Kolbein; the sum you demand for the slaying of Thorolf shall be paid.

Helga.—How may this be, my husband? You have promised me a man's life before this feud would be ended.

Kolbein.—Have I not demanded an exceedingly high compensation for Thorolf's death?

Helga.—But Thorolf was slain in a pledged truce.

Broddi.—That truce was made under compulsion.

Kolbein.—The man's life you stipulated for yourself you have chosen and taken yourself, or else, where is Helgi Skaftason?

(*HELGA is silent.*)

Brand.—Helgi Skaftason! Where is he?

Botolf.—His axe is there! (*DEACON SIGURD looks around.*) Are you still carrying weapons, Deacon Sigurd? Clercs are not permitted to bear arms.

Sigurd.—Great need I thought there was to do so now. The danger in which was my lady Jorun and you also, sir bishop, and the axe lay before my feet.

Botolf.—Nevermore carry arms, deacon!

Brand.—Is Helgi Skaftason still alive? If so, is it not possible that his deed be atoned for?

Helga.—I shall no longer conceal from you, Brand Kolbeinsson, that Helgi Skaftason will no more dry his axe on the fringe of my veil! In order now that this our reconciliation be kept well I desire to have your son Kalf, to foster him up with me.

Jorun.—That shall never be, that you train my boy to be a disturber of the peace.

Botolf.—That shall never be; the boy is a hopeful man for a chieftain and ought to be trained up to love peace and abide by the law.

Kolbein.—What punishment would you inflict on her, if she got the boy?

Botolf.—The excommunication of the Holy Church; the Church wants peace! (*Short silence.*)

Helga (furiously).—You stand there still, Alf of Grof; do you still wish to have a sack pulled over my head?

Kolbein.—It will never do that a lout insult a high-born woman with impunity. Therefore, I decree that Alf of Grof shall leave the country, never more to return whilst she is in living life.

Alf.—Why not rather have me put to death?

Helga.—You fear death too much, you coward!

Broddi.—And under what conditions shall I make peace with you?

Kolbein.—You shall have your sword back, and sit in the high seat for the remainder of the evening, but as soon as the sea is open again (*slaps BRODDI on his shoulder*) we shall, both of us, go to meet Thord Kakali and his Westfirthings.

Brand.— Much has your fame grown through these happenings, kinswoman Helga! Exceeding precious must be all your finery, if every spot on the fringes of your veil shall cost a man's life.

Helga.— You will remember, kinsman, that I am a descendant in the fourth generation from King Magnus Bareleg. Lady Jorun, come hither and share the dais with us women. (*Woman's garments are put on JORUN when she joins the women. BRAND and BOTOLF share the lower seat of honor. The men sheathe their swords, hang up their shields, and seat themselves. KOLBEIN THE YOUNG takes up a drinking-horn; horns are passed among the men.*)

Kolbein.— To-day we have brought to a happy end a feud, the like of which has not been within this district.

Brand.— And the quarrel has ended with full reconciliation.

Alf.— Indeed, we have been fully reconciled, Helgi Skaftason and I; he going to hell and I into exile.

Helga.— Worse condition you might have got, Alf of Grof.

Kolbein.— And to-morrow we shall accompany Bishop Botolf to Holar together, with five hundred men, and shall reinstate him with the greatest honors. Then we shall furlough the greater part of our men. (*The men raise shouts of joy.*) And after that we hope that we may dwell in peace for some time.

Salvor.— Meanwhile we women shall heal the wounds of the men.

Botolf.— And then there will be peace on earth.

Sigurd.— And good will among men!

(*Curtain*)

INDRIDI EINARSSON: ICELANDIC DRAMATIST AND HIS SAGA DRAMA

BY LEE M. HOLLANDER

INDRIDI EINARSSON'S 'Sword and Crozier' is the first Icelandic play to be done into English. Very probably, the well-informed reader will wonder, not so much that a translation 'should be so late in forthcoming,' but that, of all things, there should exist a dramatic literature worthy the name in that Ultima Thule. He is, indeed, not in any way to be blamed for not suspecting the possibility of a highly developed drama under conditions such as obtain in Iceland, even though he may well be aware that lyric poetry has been cultivated there with ardor and success.

When authors of small nations, such as Denmark and Holland, have been known to complain about the limited circle they can hope to reach, how true, how pathetically true, is this of Iceland, with its scant eighty thousand inhabitants of poor fishermen and farmers thinly spread over the lordly spaces of their far-away, rugged and barren island! What audience can an author expect there? Nor is it to be thought that his very difficult mother-tongue will permit a comprehension of his work among the reading public of the other Scandinavian lands.

It stands to reason — whatever enthusiasts on the subject have said to the contrary — that, by its very nature, the drama can attain independent and legitimate growth only in centers of human habitation, where the stage — very necessarily — epitomizes the tendencies of the times, and, if occupied by a real literature in every sense, is the self-expression of a great community. As late as 1886 a sober-minded author on Scandinavian literature was able to say, with some justice, 'Iceland lacks all conditions for a dramatic literature.' And the situation has not changed essentially since. Whatever has been done in that line in recent times is to all intents and purposes due to stimulation from abroad and, in so far, artificial. So far, none of the more ambitious native efforts have been on the program of the stage of Reykjavik to be performed by the very estimable amateur players of that town.

The above is by no means said in a spirit of reproach. On the contrary, all honor to the patriotic men who, by writing dramas in their mother-tongue, are willing to forego the emoluments and recognition to be gained from audiences in more favored lands: for the sake of enriching their native

literature; for the sake of showing both the world and their own people that neither in this art are they inferior to other nations; for the sake of demonstrating to their satisfaction that a contribution of Iceland to world-literature is no more an impossibility now than in the older times, when it enriched us with lore and history, and gave the world what Greece and Rome did not, the realistic novel.

Three authors divide the honors in this field: Matthías Jochumsson, a gifted lyric poet, now in his old age; the promising young playwright, Jóhann Sigurjónsson; and Indridi Einarsson, now in his prime, whose most original contribution to Icelandic literature is herewith presented. The poet having excellent command of English, I am fortunate to be able (with his permission) to quote *ipsissima verba* on his life and development.

‘I was born in the North of Iceland, on April 30, 1851, and was a farmer’s boy of good old family. My chief work at home was haymaking in summer, and in winter being a shepherd. Every spring I was up all the long bright nights, watching the flock that they should not damage the cultivated soil by eating the young grass. I think that solitude (from the eighth to fourteenth year of my life) has fostered my fancy and imagination and dipped me deep in the romanticism of that time (1858–64). In 1865 I went to Reykjavik, and was initiated at the Lyceum (Latin school) in the spring of 1866. I went through the Lyceum in ordinary course. When I began to read Virgilius I felt as if I got wings on my immortal soul, and I think I shall never lose them wholly again. I began to read the poets, starting with the comedies of Old Holberg the Dane, and passing to Schiller and Goethe and Heine. I read all plays of Shakespeare (in Danish translation, then). I studied “Oidipous Tyrannos,” Sophocles’ awful tragedy, in the original, and read Plautus and Terentius as other boys, Icelandic and Danish fiction.

‘During my first year at college I saw Matthías Jochumsson’s “Útilegumenn” (The Outlaws) performed at Reykjavik: they had then very fine Icelandic scenery, and went home in ecstasy over the performance, feeling that I had seen the brightest and strongest play in the world. Of my reading I thought “Macbeth,” “Gretchen im Carcer” (“Faust” I), and “Oidipous Tyrannos” finest and fullest. While at Reykjavik I wrote “Nýársnóttin” (New Year’s Night) and got it acted at the college, with the greatest possible success. That drama formed a turning point in my life — as the author of it I went to Copenhagen to pursue my studies as graduate student. I left college made to half of what I am.

‘While studying Political Science at Copenhagen I wrote the drama, “Hellismenn” (The Cave-dwellers). I had come south with two other dramas in my mind. But the atmosphere in Copenhagen was strongly

realistic at that time; my Romanticism was not able to withstand it. Without my knowledge I turned to Realism, and when I began to think about my intended dramas I could not write on them because all my thoughts had taken another direction. After completing my examinations I returned, Copenhagen having made the other half of what I am. In 1880 I was appointed auditor of the Official Accounts of Iceland, and got married. During the ten ensuing years I was buried under an avalanche of accounts and official documents and could hardly hold my head up above the waters. The wings of my soul drooped with exhaustion. My dramatic muse awakened several times, but I could not receive her visits. At last, in 1890, I began to write "Skipit sekkur" [The Ship is Sinking,—a naturalistic drama], parts of which I rewrote seven times; so badly had I treated my muse that she began to work so slowly. . . .'

To this I shall only add that the poet has modestly omitted to state that in his capacity of Chief of the Department of Statistics he is the compiler of an excellent year-book on the trade relations and industries of his native isle; that he is the author of several dramas not mentioned by him; and that 'Sword and Crozier,' his latest drama (1899), has already been translated into German and Danish.

I subjoin a synopsis of this play, in order to facilitate an appreciation of it at the first reading.

Act I.—The chieftain of the North Quarter of Iceland, Kolbein the Young, lies sick unto death from the after-effects of an old wound and sends for his kinsmen and other nobles of the Quarter. While delivering his message to them, Thorolf, his favorite (secretly the lover of the chieftain's wife, Helga), and long a thorn in the flesh of these proud men as an upstart, infuriates them anew by his insolent bearing. Obedient to the call of their chief, they assemble about him to determine on measures for the defence of the land, and to learn of the disposition of his dominions. The weak Brand is given his lawful share, which agrees well enough with Lady Helga's self-seeking plans of uniting all the land under her and Thorolf's rule. The more forceful Broddi is entitled to the other half; but when Kolbein, very conveniently for her, becomes delirious she substitutes Thorolf's name instead, shrewdly taking the precaution of compelling Brand by force of arms to swear him an everlasting truce — ostensibly to atone for having offered an insult to Brand.

Act II.—Broddi now assumes the leadership of the outraged nobles, Brand being bound, as he thinks, by his oath, and incapable of strongly opposing their intention to kill Thorolf. By chance, and in fulfillment of a prophecy, Thorolf seeks refuge from a snowstorm in a wintry cave and there is forewarned of his impending death by Woden himself. He is sur-

prised by the allies and slain. But no sooner is their purpose accomplished than Helga, his protectress, appears on the scene and smilingly assures them of retribution awaiting them. Her information that Kolbein is on the road to recovery strikes the nobles with dismay. Broddi immediately decides on assuming the aggressive; but on Brand's suggestion they choose first to cleanse themselves before the world by receiving absolution for their deed from Bishop Botolf at Holar.

Act III.—Here Kolbein puts them to flight. He, in his turn, must flee before Broddi's superior forces, but not without audaciously carrying along the bishop, who in his fear and rage has the *Treuga Dei* rung over the land. This frustrates the immediate pursuit by Broddi.

Act IV.—While the truce is still in force, Lady Helga visits Brand's wife, Jorun. Childless herself, she desires to foster up one of Jorun's sons in her own cruel way, promising, in return, to procure an honorable peace for Brand; or else, to destroy him. The loving mother staunchly refuses. But soon the weakness of Brand's situation becomes evident. Unable to act with the requisite force and severity, he has lost the confidence of his dependents who fear to rise against the superior genius of Kolbein. The last hope departs when Broddi learns through a (forged) letter that his fortifications are accessible to Kolbein by subterranean passages. Utterly dismayed, the allies decide to throw themselves upon the mercy of Kolbein the Young. Brand's wife follows them, disguised in male attire. She knows that Helga thirsts for his life, but also that she has sworn to spare him if any one were found willing to give his life instead.

Act V.—Brand and his little troop file into the warrior-filled hall of Kolbein. In vain they seek conciliation at any price with the chieftain, who is enraged by the slaying of his friend Thorolf, and infuriated beyond measure by the speeches of his implacable wife. Even Jorun's offering her life for Brand's does not soften his heart; when, finally, the prisoner-bishop's threat of excommunication subdues Kolbein with the fear of the hereafter. Compensation is duly imposed upon the allies, and peace once more rules in the harried land.

The subject of the above drama was suggested by two or three rather meagre pages of the '*Islendingasaga*' of Sturla Thordsson (ed. Vigfússon, ch. 146). To my notion, the poet has succeeded admirably in reproducing the cool coloring, the ironic-pessimistic attitude, that uncompromisingly masculine sentiment we know so well in their refreshing acerbity from the best sagas. Not the least meritorious thing in the play, by the way, is the very slight insistence on Thorolf's relations to Helga, notwithstanding its temptation to the author of a social drama betraying strong influence of Ibsen; for the saga — it is to be borne in mind — is the literature of revenge

and ambition as ruling motives, love having an incomparably smaller sphere allotted to it. Too much weight laid on that relation would have been ruinous to the total conception of the play.

In conformity to that conception are also the terse, pithy language which allows us to surmise the unlimited possibilities hidden in the saga literature, and the equally succinct manner of character drawing.

The most interesting figure in the drama is Brand, a Hamletic character without a Hamlet's zest of retaliation — noble, generous, and beloved; yet ever a loser, because never resolutely willing the means to an end. As Thorolf avers scornfully, 'Brand lacks both the forethought *before* battle, and that fire *in* battle which wins the victory.' The reign of lawlessness and bloodshed appalls him, to be sure; but he cannot see that his own irresolution is one of the causes. 'He is sick in his soul.' But 'peace'! — cries Broddi — 'whenever was peace gotten in feuds, excepting the battle be won or — lost.' And yet, by the irony of fate, both his birth and his noble gifts make men look to Brand as Kolbein's natural successor. The tigerish Kolbein himself is equaled in ruthless pursuit of his own ends, but not in good fortune, by Broddi. As foils to these larger characters stand out the mean, vengeful Einar, the brutal Alf, the insolent but brave Thorolf. In Jorun we fancy we see the living strength of Christian virtue and devotion opposed to the heathen fierceness and self-seeking of Helga. Between the two parties the bishop, whose motives and intentions are, however, not brought out with sufficient clearness. Like the proverbial fifth wheel of a wagon he seems out of place and embarrassing, whenever he appears — a predicament, to be sure, which he shares with the Church itself in those times, whenever not guided by a born ruler.

Both in poetic value and technically — excepting for the staginess of the three meetings in the cave — the second act is the most successful of the drama. It is, in fact, a little masterpiece. The action is impetuous, strong, and telling. The dramatic germs potentially present in the situation are developed here with a fine consistency. Thorolf's death is made the central fact on which hinges the whole action of the play, while by Brand's fatal vacillations and the insults offered to Helga by his henchmen important tributary impulses are given toward the following development. Unfortunately, the third act, dramatically considered, is concerned chiefly with details. It suffers, even more than the first act, from a certain prolixity which is not wholly made good by its theatrically effective ending. However bright and skillfully wrought in the incident of the fraudulent miracle, it might well be spared, with a view for the whole. And the same is true of a considerable part of the dialogue.

There is small doubt that the fifth act offered the greatest difficulties

to be overcome, because here the poet is face to face with the essentially epic nature of his subject matter and was certainly put to it to overcome this handicap. This is the state of affairs: The enraged chieftain is prevented by his implacable wife from yielding. The allies do all in their power to obtain peace. If Old Norse conceptions are adhered to there is a deadlock. Now, nothing prevents the epic art of the saga from telling, at this juncture, that forth stepped Bishop Botolf and with threat of excommunication brought about a satisfactory conclusion. It is different in the drama. In it the intervention of the bishop as *deus ex machina* is a quasi-external element, because not sufficiently motivated in the preceding development. It remains an incident.

For all that the title is justifiable. Conceding that this sudden 'good' ending looks like a concession and certainly is a constructive weakness, yet in the inwardness of the subject it is excellently motivated by the typically mediæval attitude of Kolbein to salvation and the Church as its sole bestower. Notwithstanding the ambiguity of its victory, the Crozier *has* won. Another power than the moribund gods and the overstrained Teutonic conceptions of morality — the Law of the Sword — has conquered, even if by the help of conceptions almost as crude. And this well indicates the normal course of Christianity, which has at all times made its way more by weight of power and influence than by conviction and conversion.

Finally a word on the subject of the drama. Our readers are beginning to become so accustomed to the spiced dishes of Continental Problem drama,— reaction against which has set in there long ago,— that fears may well be entertained that the rude simple fare of the Historic Drama will be rejected with scorn. This would indeed be regrettable, as tending to show that we are still far from a sober catholicity of taste, and still in the leading-strings of the Old World, not yet having obtained that independence and maturity of judgment which consists in being wise enough to gather nourishment suitable to one's needs from whatever be offered to us, even if be not labeled with the ism of the hour.

THE NEW DRAMA

"The play's the thing"

THE PLAYFARER

BY HOMER H. HOWARD

THE BIJOU

AS early as eighteen thirty-five a theater known as the Lion existed where the Bijou now is. It was maintained under various names until taken possession of by B. F. Keith. Later he decided to make a motion picture place of this theater, and in February, 1908, it was opened for that purpose. Soon a new policy was adopted and Mrs. Josephine Clement was appointed manager of the Bijou Theater, with instructions to develop an entertainment of a different type from the usual motion picture program.

Mr. Keith did this not only from a desire to preserve the old theater, but to see if the public would not support a higher-class cheap show. His confidence in the sanity of the taste of the public has been fully justified by the results of the experiment.

Mrs. Clement's first step was to improve the lecture which was a part of the regular program. These Ten-Minute Talks are now given by a good reader and really worth-while material is presented. Such men as Arthur Deitrick, Eugene Farns-

worth, and C. W. Russel have prepared these talks. In order to secure good singing, it was made known that one day each week would be open for all those who wished to try. In this way good material has been secured and developed within the walls of the house itself. National songs, appropriately costumed, were made a part of the program, and recently the idea has been enlarged into a whole series of folk songs and dances. Mrs. Clement is too clever to force the growth of any tendency, but lets it develop and strengthen of its own accord. There is no set policy, rigidly followed, but changes are made whenever they are needed, and each new development aims to be a real improvement. There is a spirit of co-operation on the part of all those connected with the theater which has meant much in its success.

The idea which makes the Bijou especially deserving of notice is the introduction on Feb. 28, 1910, of a regular policy of producing a one-act play each week. This, with the occasional introduction of a short opera, has continued to the present time. As early as June, 1909, 'Shadows,' a mystical tragedy by Evelyn G. Sutherland, was put on, and in January of the following year a

one-act comedy, 'The Red Star,' by Wm. M. Blatt, was produced. The success of these plays decided the management to adopt the one-act play as a regular part of the program. The play first to be acted under the new policy was Hermann Hagedorn's 'The World Too Small for Three.' This is important because the one-act play has almost no place on the professional stage. Vaudeville houses put on an occasional one-act piece of the lighter sort. The Bijou now provides a place where the serious worker in this form may see his work produced and watch the effect on the audience. That there is a constantly growing interest in this country in one-act plays as a separate genre of dramatic composition is proved by the continuing success of the experiment. This winter the manager opened a prize contest; one hundred dollars for the best one-act comedy, and fifty dollars for the second best comedy, to be produced at the Bijou. The first prize went to George F. Abbott, Rochester, N. Y., for his very excellent comedy, 'The Man in the Manhole,' and the second prize to S. F. Austin, of San Antonio, Tex., for a farce, 'The Winning of General Jane.'

One hundred and seventy-nine manuscripts were received. The judges were Prof. Geo. P. Baker, Walter Hampden, and Francis Powell. Ten plays, five comedies and five serious plays, were reserved from the contest for production at the

Bijou. As far as settings are concerned, the plays are well produced. Unfortunately, the acting is not all that one could desire, but with the limited resources at command the results are remarkably satisfactory. Such authors as Upton Sinclair, Hermann Hagedorn, Percy McKaye, Hermann Suderman, Pauline C. Bouvé, Gerald Villiers-Stuart have permitted their plays to be given at the Bijou, which speaks for the quality of the work.

THE LITTLE THEATER

THE LITTLE THEATER, in New York City, under the management of Winthrop Ames, is the first theater in America designed for intimacy. It was carefully planned, and has been well executed. Such theaters are known abroad, but this playhouse is a decided novelty, and an advance in America. The distance from the front of the stage to the rear of the last row of seats is a trifle over forty feet. There are no balconies and no boxes. The lighting is by an indirect system, which suffuses the auditorium with a soft, restful glow. The lobby, the retiring room, and the smoking room are all done in quiet, pleasant fashion. The auditorium decoration again is novel. There is paneling in dark-brown birch, with inserted tapestries above and a curtain in gobelin blues and carpet of gray.

The lighting system for the stage

is most complete, as are all the arrangements behind the scenes, dressing rooms, flies, and bridges. The chief novelty on this side of the playhouse is the use of the Japanese idea of a revolving platform for the stage. The revolving stage has been used largely in Germany, but this is one of the few instances where it has been used in America. Its value is shown for sets that require no great depth, and it permits quick changes of scenery. The circular stage is thirty feet in diameter.

Mr. Ames said in advance that his aim was to create a house of 'entertainment for intelligent people.' Behind this vague statement lies a force which has already proved that the Little Theater can entertain and at the same time show itself worthy of the best ideals in drama. Mr. Ames has produced Galsworthy's admirable comedy, 'The Pigeon'; Charles Rann Kennedy's 'The Terrible Meek,' and the same author's translation of M. Laloy's French version of the Chinese play, 'The Flower of the Palace of Han.' However diverse likings and dislikings of these pieces may have been, there is no doubt that they were all worthy of a first-rate production.

Mr. Ames announces for the coming year a series of matinees, especially for children. It is pleasant to see the professional theaters falling into line with the increasing trend of amateur organizations in paying attention to the need of good plays for children.

MISS HORNIMAN'S PLAYERS

LATE in March, at the Plymouth Theater in Boston, Miss Horniman's players from Manchester, England, gave their only performance in the United States. They came under the auspices of the American Drama Society. They presented 'Nan,' a three-act tragedy by John Masefield, whose work we otherwise would not have seen for some time. Aside from the remarkable play, the performance is memorable as setting a new standard in acting. The value of perfect ensemble work was clearly demonstrated.

SUMURÛN

SUMURÛN, an oriental pantomime, which Winthrop Ames brought to the Casino in New York, is the work of Max Reinhardt, a progressive German manager. It has been produced throughout Germany and in London, with great success, and now comes to America. 'Sumurûn' deserves notice because it is a great novelty, but especially because it has certain lessons for us in America.

The story of the pantomime is a more or less lurid eastern melodrama, based on the Arabian Nights. A hunchback is in lovewith a beautiful young dancer, who hates him. He sells her to a fierce old sheik, to get her out of the way of another lover, the sheik's son. Then he takes poison. Sumurûn, the sheik's

chief wife, favors a handsome cloth merchant called Nur-al-Din, whom she manages to smuggle into the harem in a chest of silks. The intruder is, of course, discovered by the sheik, who is warned of the treachery below, as he is about to kill his son, whom he has found in the room with his new dancer. He has Nur-al-Din at his mercy when the supposedly poisoned hunchback slips in and stabs him. The lovers are united and the inmates of the harem set free.

It is true that there is nothing strikingly original nor remarkable in the outline of the story. That is impossible in a wordless play. Bernard Shaw, speaking of a pantomime with music, 'A Pierrot's Life,' produced some years ago in London, says, 'I am conscious of the difficulty of making any but the most threadbare themes intelligible to the public, without words.' Reinhardt was wise in selecting a vivid tale, and one easy to follow. Besides, he has told the story with remarkable directness and swiftness. Attention and interest never for an instant flag, owing to the impression of incessant swarming life which we get from the scene before us. The personages are clearly and definitely characterized by means of the careful working out of the details of every action. Colors and their arrangement play a positive part in the understanding of the play.

Pantomime is the foundation of

drama. An audience which appreciates pantomime will appreciate good drama. Action is the element which distinguishes drama from other literary forms, and pantomime is made up wholly of action, hence its very real place in drama. The greatest moments in life are manifested not in words but in action. Dramatists are coming to realize that a gesture may be more expressive and natural at tense moments than speech. We have some striking examples of this.

In the silent opening of 'What Every Woman Knows,' Barrie accomplishes, by the chess game and the entrance of the brother, what ten minutes of dialogue would have failed to do. Roberto Bracco's 'Infedele,' played in English as 'The Countess Coquette,' by Nazimova, is a still more remarkable instance. The play, in lines, is a very short one, but by the use of pantomime, even long stretches of it, there is produced a play of the regular length. One of the most intense scenes in modern drama is the prison scene in Galsworthy's 'Justice,' where not a word is spoken till the end, when a cry rings out into the still, breathless house.

The 'Sumurûn' shows that there is much which we can accomplish without speech. Aside from its value to the drama, pantomime has a large significance for acting. The necessity of making one's self intelligible without words forces the actor to weigh and consider every

movement, gesture, and facial action.

'Sumurûn,' like all pantomimic entertainments, seems to have no great value in and of itself. It is remarkable for the admirable co-operation of the performers, the potency of trained gesture and studied facial expression. The music, which was written by Victor Hol-örder, is excellent in its harmony and appropriateness. The decorative quality of even the shabby scenery used in America is striking. It achieves an artistic, oriental effect without gaudy, costly, or spectacular elements.

Perhaps the greatest lesson of 'Sumurûn' is for stage managers. All of them might profit by an intensive study of this production.

IN BALTIMORE.—The fashionable dramatic club of Baltimore, known as the Wednesday Club, expects to develop a theater for regular amateur performances. This playhouse will be modeled on Boston's 'Toy Theater.'

AGAINST THE SPECULATOR.—The Chicago city council has offered to reduce the theater licenses in amounts from one thousand to five thousand dollars if the theater managers will refuse to take back from agencies unsold tickets. Nine managers are said to have agreed to do so. This will aid the public to get good seats without paying advanced prices. Any gleam of civic interest

in the real welfare of the theaters is most welcome.

The editor of the *Playfarer* will be glad to receive information about any American dramatic venture, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant.



THE PLAYHOUSE

BY CHARLOTTE PORTER

Civic Experiments in Massachusetts

WHEN we say 'Civic Theater' we are all so used to thinking in terms of money that we think of nothing but a theater financially supported by a city or community. Yet there are other ways of support that are more vital.

A civic theater cannot be created by money, although it requires it. Intelligence demands, therefore, when we say 'Civic Theater,' that we think at once and foremost of these other more vital ways of support.

Fortunately we can appeal to historic life for light on these other and more vital ways of support by city or community. Historic life can show us well-ascertained facts concerning drama that has been supported by the civic life of its whole people, and expresses, in consequence, the life of its men of genius, and of its interpretative artists and artisans, along with its racial genius.

Because historic life at its great moments of dramatic activity can

show us these facts and supplement the bias of the present moment toward but one way of support, I shall appeal to it to make our definition complete and sound.

Yet because we all, first of all, are the children of our current notions, and only in a deeper sense, when we think below the bias of the moment, the children of all life's experience, I shall call attention first to two or three facts of civic life here in Massachusetts which illustrate merely the financial support of a theater by a city or community.

It seems to me significant that already one of our own states, and that state Massachusetts, offers an example or two of this least vital but most obvious necessity of financial ownership or support of a city's main theater.

Northampton is the town in Massachusetts which took the lead in this respect. It was first to secure ownership of a theater.

A native citizen of Northampton, Mr. G. L. Hinckley, who knows the town well, at my request has written the following report of it:

'The Academy of Music of Northampton was presented to the city of Northampton by Mr. Edward H. R. Lyman, of Brooklyn, N. Y. In making this gift it was his desire to benefit his native town by providing it with a safe, handsome, and well-equipped theater of a suitable size.

'The academy has a building to itself. It is set some fifty feet from the main street, and has a very at-

tractive façade. On one side is a wide street and on the other a small park, which extends behind the academy. In appearance it is, therefore, more like a municipal building than the ordinary theater, and in two respects is safer as regards fires: in the first place there is no other building within one hundred feet of it; and in the second, it is far easier for an audience to leave quickly. The interior leaves nothing to be desired as regards vision or acoustics. The house seats almost exactly one thousand, not including its boxes.

'The academy was formally accepted by the City Council, Feb. 6, 1893, after it had secured the necessary authority from the General Court of Massachusetts. The deed of gift, which was executed Nov. 4, 1892, contained the following provisions:

' "1. Said granted premises shall be devoted and used solely and exclusively for the delivery of lectures, the production of concerts and operas and the representation and delineation of the drama of the better character, as shall be approved by the unanimous vote of the committee or board of management hereinafter named.

' "2. The management is vested solely in a board composed of the following five trustees, serving without other compensation than three free seats at every performance: (a) the donor, (b) the town mayor of Northampton, *ex-officio*, (c) the President of Smith College, *ex-officio*,

(d) Mr. C. H. Pierce, (e) Mr. T. G. Spaulding."

"These last two are citizens of Northampton. Vacancies, other than among the two *ex-officio* members, are filled by election by the remaining members of the board. This board met and organized April 5, 1893. There have been but two changes in its personnel, aside from the changes in the office of mayor, Mr. Lyman being succeeded by his son, Mr. Frank Lyman, and President Seelye by President Burton.

"It will be observed that the institution is kept out of politics by placing the control of it in what is virtually a close corporation, and yet through the mayor the citizens are directly represented in the management.

"Other conditions provide that if in any year there shall be an excess of receipts over disbursements such excess shall be paid into the city treasury of Northampton, with the annual account. If in any year the disbursements shall exceed the receipts, the treasurer of the city of Northampton shall appropriate and pay to said board or committee or to the person who shall be acting as treasurer for it such sum as may be needed to balance the accounts for such year.

"When the gift was made there was much discussion among the citizens as to the advisability of accepting it as well as to the propriety of the city's ownership of a theater. This latter doubt was set at rest

when people realized that the city had already a hall for kindred purposes in the city hall. As to the first question, it soon came to be recognized that such a theater could not but be of advantage to the city, though many felt it would involve too heavy a drain on the city's financial resources, a fear which has never yet been realized. Discussion was again started when a bill was before the state legislature, providing for the incorporation of the trustees, but the necessity for such a step was so evident that opposition died away. For many years the academy has been taken as a matter of course and ranks as an important and desirable municipal institution. No one now ever thinks of the objections formerly urged against it.

"Financially, the academy has about held its own. Practically, it has done much better, for the City Council has insisted that all licenses — fees for shows, amounting on the average to some \$400 per annum — be paid directly into the city treasury. Still the academy is not run as a money-making institution, for the trustees strive to provide a liberal variety of entertainment and to have everything the best of its kind. Occasionally they have brought to town some high-class attraction that was not likely even to pay expenses — a venture in which few theaters can afford to engage. At one time large profits were made from so-called "10, 20, 30-cent stock companies" that spent a week in

town and gave two performances daily, but the class of patronage attracted by such shows is now supporting the new vaudeville theater and the moving picture houses. So the academy is becoming more and more a purely first-class theater.

'One great difficulty with which the trustees have had to contend is how to steer a course between the Syndicate and the Shuberts. The Syndicate refuses to book in a house open to other agencies, and the Shuberts can offer few but musical shows. In fact, neither side seems prepared to supply enough attractions. So altogether this matter seems at present almost hopeless of solution as long as the prevailing dearth of plays and actors and surfeit of theaters make it well-nigh impossible for one-night stands to fare well. In practice both sides to the controversy have been tried and found wanting.'

This Northampton fact of the possession of a town theater tells us at once that the measure of financial support of a civic theater involved in the ownership of a theater building is the least vital and efficient step toward the end in view. It is an effort that looks out for the mere shell. It puts the town in the position of a benevolent landlord toward a real estate investment that happens to fall in the artistic class. And such a class of investment requires further equipment to cope with the equipment of less benevolent foreign landlords holding similar property.

Unless civic responsibility develops beyond this comparatively helpless position, no such improvement of the situation as may lead to dramatic growth may result from this foundation. At the same time, even this meager measure of civic control of the dramatic situation has bettered Northampton's chances in the matter of drama. It has shielded the town from utter helplessness against dramatic deterioration through receiving whatever outside commercial managements may choose to offer. It has enabled the town to choose for itself to some degree and most notably to gain access to a higher class of independent dramatic entertainment than would otherwise be open to it.

But even in the act of thus looking out for the mere shell of a civic theater, the difficulties incident to a partial reform of the dramatic situation appear. They are the difficulties incident both to the current dramatic commercial monopoly, and to *not* doing more than own a building. The next step toward surmounting these difficulties would be to give the shell a substantial kernel. It is natural enough that in an age as much disposed as ours is to give the dominant place to financial support that the most obvious and superficially practical thing to do was done first. It is natural enough, too, in the working-out process, that its superficialness becomes evident.

Pittsfield comes next both in date and significance of its step toward

financial support for the community of a theater.

To Mr. Edward Boltwood, a member of the executive committee responsible for this step on behalf of the town, I am indebted for the following account for which I asked of its initiation:

'A corporation of thirty citizens bought the local theater ("The Colonial") last January (1912). We are professional and business men, maintaining no academic theories, believing in a practical way that a protected and well-conducted theater is as sound a municipal asset as a good public library is. We have not printed any report.

'After cleansing, re-decorating, and re-equipping the house, we shall install a resident stock company, to open May 20, under the direction of Mr. William Parker, who is at present producing manager at the Castle Square, with Mr. Craig. We have no very definite plan, except to make our theater a place of entertainment for intelligent people.'

Among the comments of the press involved in stating this item of news at the time, the way the 'Nation' put it, and the way the 'Outlook' put it, are fairly representative of public opinion of the need and value of this civic step.

Said the 'Nation':

'Some of the leading citizens of Pittsfield, Mass., being dissatisfied with the commercial management of the principal theater in the town, have bought the house with the

avowed purpose of conducting it upon lines more worthy of intelligent support.'

Under the caption 'A Community Theater' the fact was recorded in the 'Outlook' in a news editorial (Feb. 10, 1912), from which the following sentences are an extract:

'Pittsfield is . . . a community which represents the best of old and new New England. A very interesting experiment is being tried there by the Pittsfield Theater Company — a company of gentlemen — who believe that in a town like Pittsfield the theater justifies a consideration not dissimilar to that with which we regard our public library or our art museum! These gentlemen are leading the way in a movement which ought to be widespread. They have faced, not a theory, but a condition, and they will discover that, so far as immediate popular use is concerned, the theater is of more importance in a community than either the art museum or the public library. If they give the people what will interest the people, . . . if they arrange for popular prices, secure good actors, and treat the theater as a community institution in the same sense as an art museum and a library are community institutions, the "Outlook" has small doubt of their success.'

However the Pittsfield experiment turns out, considered, as it should be, as a sign of the times, it tells us emphatically — first, that the present system of meekly taking whatever

plays are sent on from New York by a monopolistic commercial management, for its own good, is by intelligent citizens seen to be anti-civic. Again, it tells us that the shortest cut to give the community open access to all the dramas it wants itself or may assimilate for its needed pleasure and development is naturally seen to be the public library method as first established by Boston and since approved and adopted by all public-spirited communities.

This method was devised to give the community free access to all the books it wants for pleasure, profit, and advancement. A similar device to give the community cheap access to all the plays it wants for the same purposes may readily follow by a correspondingly practicable path of administration by a special commission. The same path thus proved good by test of time and utility for the library has since been followed with adaptation to its different purposes by the park commission.

The commission administering the public library and employing experts to operate it in all its departments and fields of activity has for many years accomplished and continued its civic work not merely adequately and thoroughly, but with superiority and distinction. This originally self-appointed group of citizens was fired with the desire not to do an exclusive or sectional work, but to put upon its feet for the whole muni-

cipality a civic institution. It proceeded toward this goal by so shaping the undertaking that the city should ultimately accept and assume charge of it as its own.

All the facts of experience we have go to prove that this public library method of providing the shortest cut efficiently to give the public proper free access to the world of books, is the method providing the shortest cut efficiently to give the public proper cheap access to the world of drama. By this method financial support for a theater may be attained that shall be pledged to the civic good and adapted to local dramatic requirements and development. This method of administration by a special commission is not alone a proven feasible and simple civic method, but also the only effective way yet broached to secure the dramatic life and growth of a community.

Political corruption is no more to be accepted as a good argument to put us off from the most feasible approach to the end needed than for the public library itself. There may or might be some political corruption in the administration of a public library. Are we, therefore, to give up the library in our cities? There may be political corruption in the administration of our public schools. Was it, therefore, a mistake to establish them? Are we, therefore, to give up the public school? Clearly, no! We are to strengthen and safeguard them to the utmost.

One thing besides has been sufficiently exemplified by recent facts. It is that the easy substitute for a civic theater commonly called in the newspapers 'A Rich Man's Theater' will not represent nor attract the community.

Under phenomenally affluent conditions for commanding good results, that substitute has proved its futility with brilliant conspicuousness. Any one may now see that it was foredoomed to fail. Why? Because it was out of touch with the people, fated to be sectional and temporary, in its attempts and achievements.

Such failure shows what historic life confirms, that more efficient than money support is the support of a unified civic life and of such genius and talent as require to be fed by that life, and do not flourish on cash alone any more than they do on no cash at all. In order to secure good conditions for artistic fertility in place of artistic futility, all these encouraging factors, in their just degree, require to be taken into the account.

An academic theater would, I believe, prove equally futile. All such substitutes for a civic theater are doomed to barrenness because of their segregation from the life of the community. Historic facts bear witness alike to the bloodlessness of the exclusive and the sensualizing of the commercial elements, when either gain the upper hand in control of the dramatic output. Under the auspices of neither will the great

leavening middle mass of our people be put in touch with the stage to the mutual advantage of the community and the drama.



THE PLAY READER

BY HELEN A. CLARKE

I

WE are told by many critics that Euripides is not so great as Æschylus or Sophocles, yet he seems to be on the whole the most beloved of the Greek dramatists. As Porson said of him, 'We approve Sophocles more than Euripides, but we love Euripides more than Sophocles.'

There are two reasons why he has been loved. First, among his countrymen and the rest of the world, because, as a master of pathos, he has no equal among the dramatists of his nation, and, as some declare, no superior in the literature of the world. Second, by the moderns, especially the English, because they see in him the promise of the future. He is now regarded as anticipating in many ways the Elizabethan drama. Churton Collins has well said, 'But in nothing does he come so nearly home to the modern world as in his studies and presentation of women. In Shakespeare and in Shakespeare alone have we a gallery of female portraits comparable in range and elaboration to what he has left us. He has painted them under almost all conditions which can elicit and

develop the expression of natural character: under the infatuation of illicit and consuming passion at war with the better self, as in Phædra; under the provocation of such wrongs and outrages as transform Medea into a tigress and Hecuba into a fiend; under all the appeals to their proper heroism, the spirit of self-sacrifice and self-abnegating devotion, as in Macaria, Polyxena, Iphigenia, and Alcestis.'

He was, however, not popular in Athens. Why? Because he was ahead of the phase of civilization and culture represented at that time in a city which was on the verge of its ruin. He denounced cruelty and oppression, he disliked war, he dwelt upon the virtues of slaves and menials, he was sympathetic with the innocence and helplessness of young children, and with all that the gentler affections can inspire or achieve.

In reading the 'Alcestis' several important points should be borne in mind in regard to the play:

1. Its production. It is the earliest of the extant plays of Euripides and was brought out B. C. 439 in the Archonship of Glaucinus. It was, according to the custom of the Greeks, entered for competition in the public prizes and performed in the great theater of Dionysius, supported by the state. The competitor was obliged to send in three tragedies called a trilogy, together with what was called a satyric play. This last might be related to the

tragedies or be quite independent, as they usually were in Sophocles and Euripides. The satyric play was named from the satyrs or attendants upon Bacchus, and was a farce or burlesque intended to relieve the feelings of the spectators after the tragedies. The 'Alcestis' was entered by Euripides as a satyric play, but it only in parts approaches the characteristics of such a play. In other parts it has the dignity and beauty of a tragedy. In fact it is more nearly like a comedy in the modern sense of the word.

2. The structure of the play. This is like that of a typical Greek tragedy with one exception. It opens, as is customary with Euripides, with a monologue, which explains the plot and the position of affairs, spoken by one of the characters, Apollo. Otherwise, it is like a regular tragedy, presenting two sorts of action, that of a chorus consisting of men or women whose functions were to comment on the action, draw morals from it, express sympathy with the actors, and that of the regular dialogue.

3. Its content. This is a Greek mythological story, in which gods and mortals are the actors. The plot brings out two social ideals which were peculiar to Greek civilization. The ideal that it was the duty, approved of by the gods, that old people should die for their children, and that wives should die for their husbands, and that such sacrifice should be accepted as a

matter of course; and the ideal of hospitality, which was incumbent, no matter what pain it might cause to exercise it.

With regard to the first ideal, many critics of this drama take the view that to the Greeks there would be nothing contemptible or unnatural in the conduct of Admetus. To quote Mr. Collins again on this point, 'Alcestis would be considered fortunate for having had an opportunity of displaying so conspicuously the fidelity to a wife's first and capital duty. Had Admetus prevented such a sacrifice he would have robbed Alcestis of an honor which every nobly ambitious woman in Hellas would have coveted. This is so much taken for granted by the poet that all that he lays stress on in the drama is the virtue rewarded by the return of Alcestis to life, the virtue characteristic of Admetus, the virtue of hospitality, to this duty in all the agony of his sorrow Admetus had been nobly true, and as a reward for what he had thus earned, the wife who had been equally true to woman's obligations was restored all-glorified to home and children and mutual love.'

The unbiased reader, however, cannot help suspecting that Euripides saw ahead of the ideals of his time and intended deliberately to show up the cowardice and selfishness of Admetus, by what the critics call the 'painful scene' between Pheres and Admetus.

In the second place, if he did not

share to some extent the feelings of the chorus that the virtue of hospitality might be carried too far, how could he have made it say:

'Many a guest from many a land
ere now

I've known arriving at Admetus'
halls,

And set before them viands; but
ne'er yet

Any more reckless have I enter-
tained

Than this, who first, although he
saw my lord,

Bowed down with sorrow, dared to
pass our gates,

And next immoderately took his fill
Of what was offered — though he
knew our grief —

And what we did not offer bade us
fetch.'

The unbiased reader will find a few critics on his side, and he will find also the poet Browning, who, in his Balaustion's 'Adventure,' has put into the mouth of his beautiful young Greek woman an interpretation which will chime in fully with his own untutored perceptions.



THE CALDRON

'Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble'

OPERA VERSUS DRAMA

WHY opera, which is a less old and less vital form of entertainment than drama (in America), should spring into such prominence is difficult to understand.

San Francisco has raised one hundred thousand dollars towards a seven-hundred-thousand-dollar opera house, which will be owned and managed by the municipality. The Metropolitan and the Chicago and the Philadelphia and the New Orleans Opera maintain themselves as centers of real artistic work, though they are not municipal enterprises. Opera in Boston is assured for another three years, and this has been accomplished through the efforts of citizens.

But America has no endowed nor municipal theater.

I would in no way decry opera, but it is very clear that some of the energy which is now being used for opera might far better be put into the wider field of drama. Because of its very nature, opera is bound to appeal to and to reach fewer people than drama. As a force and a power for education and general uplift, it can never compare with drama. There is a considerable number of people who attend the opera because they love it, but a much larger number attend because it is fashionable. All the drama leagues and numberless organizations which are trying to cultivate taste for good plays and to better the drama are on the wrong track. It is not a cultivated, appreciative public that is needed. Let those interested in drama learn a lesson from opera. Let them employ their energies to make drama fashionable. When it becomes incumbent upon society leaders to occupy

stalls in the theater for a season, we shall have an endowed theater and not until then.

THE DEUTESCHES KÜNSTLER-THEATER

READERS of THE NEW DRAMA may be interested to hear that the enterprise of the actors of the Brahm Company, which in the winter seemed uncertain, is now secure. The Deutsches Künstler-theater was incorporated on April 20, with a capital of 790,000 marks. Willy Grumwald is really to be manager, Ernst Friedmann, business manager, and among the associates are Tilla Durieux, Carl Forest, Gerhart Hauptmann, Hilde Herterich, Else Lehmann, Emil Lessing (Brahm's stage manager), Theodor Loos, Hans Marr, Emanuel Reicher, Rudolf Rittner (who declares, however, that he is to return to the theater only as associate, artistic adviser, and stage manager, and that he still has no intention of ever acting again; since his blending of blazing passion with austere self-discipline is all too rare, let us hope he will change his mind), Oscar Sauer, Mathilde Sussin (whose sublime Deaconess in 'When We Dead Awake' so fully meets Ibsen's requirement of the actor of this character: complete self-effacement until the close, and then tragic acting of the highest order; Alfred Kerr, whose words—don't you think?—no other living critic can equal, has called her 'eine der Schat-

tengestalten dieses grössten Theaters der Unscheinbarkeit, der Seele'), and Paul Wegener. The Deutsches Künstlertheater is still undecided whether to build a theater or to lease one; it will enter into active being in July, 1914, when Otto Brahm will pass, alas, from the active service of the theater, which he has served as has no other man.

JAMES PLATT WHITE.

THE 'SLAM'

A CHARACTERISTIC feature of modern newspaper criticism is the 'slam.' The fundamental principles upon which 'slams' are based are as follows: The writer of a 'slam' ought to be quite young, not long out of college. That is the only sort of person who knows enough to construct a really effective 'slam.' After one has been out of college for a few years the dividing lines between what is good art and what is bad art become more vague. The would-be critic starts out in life with a sort of Procrustean ideal of measurement, to which everything has to be cut down. He is blissfully sure of his standards, and does not need to bother his mind over any possibilities in the way of new artistic developments. Only after he begins to delve into the history of criticism upon his own account does he wake up to the fact that 'the genius is the thing,' and that the slings and arrows of outrageous critics have been powerless to crush him out.

What is true of the great genius is also true of the genuinely talented person. 'Slams' do not crush him out, they only call attention to him, which is fortunate because the majority of people engaged in creative work to-day possess talent rather than genius.

But a still more important fundamental principle to be observed by the writer of 'slams' is that he must resolutely shut his eyes to any qualities which appeal, even to him, as good qualities, while dwelling with ferocious zest upon every point that he can possibly magnify into a flaw. Or he may even fly at one bound to a pinnacle of wisdom by basing his criticism entirely upon the first chapter or the last chapter of a book, or the first act or the last act of a play. Or he may win his spurs for smartness by deliberate misstatements, born, perhaps, of carelessness, perhaps of the genuine desire to be downright disagreeable and funny. The one thing which he must carefully avoid is the slightest touch of genuine appreciation. This is not difficult, for appreciation means the power to enter into the point of view of the writer or the artist, and this the slinger of 'slams' is incapable of doing, even if he had the desire of so doing.

Blessed be the writer of 'slams.' He is as debonair and inconsequential as a young Hermes to whom only the serious lessons of life can teach sympathy and true insight, if he will let them.